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ABSTRACT

This study examined the views held by five teachers in an adult English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) program concerning their processes of curriculum implementation in a Canadian immigrant program, focusing on how the teachers assess their own autonomy over curriculum decision-making. Data were gathered in a series of interviews, in which key themes and issues were identified. Drawing on theoretical definitions of "autonomy, agency, and curriculum decision-making" and the history and concept of the teaching situation, the issue of teacher autonomy is applied to this teaching situation. Findings suggest that ESL instructors need curriculum support in a variety of areas to enhance their autonomy, including curriculum guidelines that offer options and suggestions from which to choose, especially in terms of linguistic and thematic content, and increased assistance with or professional development for assessment activities. Interview questions and prompts, letter of consent forms, a personal information questionnaire and "The Instructor's Handbook" table of contents are appended. (Contains 90 references.) (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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ED 421 022

Instructor Autonomy in Curriculum Decision Making: A Study of an Adult ESL Settlement Program

by

Douglas Fleming

ROUNDTABLE PRESENTATION at the
1998 AAAL Conference in Seattle

This session presents the findings from my Masters of Arts in Education thesis, recently completed at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto under the supervision of Dr. Alister Cumming. Dr. Patrick Allen and Dr. Diane Gérin-Lajoie sat on my thesis committee.

This handout is an abridged version of the thesis.

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It's impossible to provide full versions of my 120 page thesis at this session. This handout is an abridgement which gives the reader essential sections of the work, but does not contain substantial portions pertaining to the theoretical background, data collected and research methodology. It has also been reformatted in the interests of saving paper.

If you are interested in obtaining a full version of the thesis or would like to give me some (greatly welcomed) feedback, I can be reached by e-mail at dfleming@interlog.com , or by voice-mail at home (416) 763-4735 or at the Toronto District School Board (416) 393-8382.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the views held by 5 adult English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors about their processes of curriculum implementation in a Canadian settlement language program. Its central research question is: How do these instructors assess the value of their own autonomy over curriculum decision making? Data were collected though a series of interviews that I used to identify key themes and issues.

I drew on theoretical definitions of 'autonomy', 'agency', and 'curriculum decision making', and the historical and conceptual history of the teaching situation. I then analyzed these data to apply the issue of teacher autonomy, prominent in general education theory, to this teaching situation.

The study reveals the concerns of a group of instructors at the point of their implementation of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB). It makes the case for developing program supports for instructor 'autonomy' and demonstrates the usefulness of this concept theoretically.

Theoretical Concepts of Teacher Autonomy

In education theory, the term 'autonomy' has been used in three different senses. It is common in second language education (SLE) to use it in describing situations in which native speakers believe their language to be independent of others (Spolsky, 1989) or when learning takes place without the help of an instructor (Holec, 1981). In general education theory, however, 'autonomy' is more commonly used to describe the degree to which teachers make independent curriculum decisions, especially in the context of sweeping societal change and government policy initiatives (Apple, 1995; Apple & Jungck, 1990; Apple & Teitelbaum 1986; Egan, 1988; Fitzclarence & Kenway, 1993; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Helsby & McCulloch, 1996; Jones & Moore, 1991; Kliebard, 1988; Knight, Lingard, & Porter, 1993; Lawn, 1996; Lundgren, 1988; Paris, 1993; Robertson, 1996).

In preparing the groundwork for the present study, I first had to adopt an operational definition of 'autonomy'. Although many educational theorists have used the term, few have attempted to define it in a way that was suitable for my purposes. Helsby and McCulloch (1996) used 'autonomy' when describing struggles over curriculum control that occurred in Britain in the 1960s between teachers and the governments of the day. They contended that, prior to fundamental changes introduced in the '70's "high expectations of teacher autonomy with regard to the curriculum were generally maintained" (p.57). Dale (1989), when describing the same historical period, posited two forms of autonomy. The first, 'licensed autonomy', described a situation in which a credentialed professional is given complete freedom from bureaucratic control. The second was called 'regulated autonomy', descriptive of a situation where a credentialed professional is closely monitored. He made the case that the first form of 'autonomy' was giving way to the second. Robertson (1996) made extensive use of Dale's terms in reference to the Australian context, contending that the 'licensed autonomy' of teachers in that country was eroding as a result of recent changes in federal government education policy.

Other educational theorists define 'autonomy' in relation to the professional nature of teachers' work. Lawn (1996), taking a broad historical view, used the term 'autonomy' in his examination of 20th century curriculum control and contended that it was an integral to the process of extending professional status to teachers in the first place. A. Hargreaves (1994), in recommendations aimed at safeguarding the future of teacher professionalism, suggests that the 'self-protective autonomy' of present day teachers be replaced with 'occupational heteronomy', in which teachers work collaboratively with other partners in the wider community.

Despite the increasing wealth of theoretical work in this area, much of what I examined in the preparation for the study under discussion left me dissatisfied. In much of what I read, 'autonomy' came across as a static entity, neglecting many of the complicated and dynamic processes that I myself have experienced in the classroom. I wanted a definition that would describe the situation from an instructor's point of view. A key concept that addressed my concerns in this regard was that of 'agency', especially as developed in this context by Paris (1993). Drawing on theorists such as Arendt (1958) and Greene (1978), Paris used 'agency' when characterizing relationships of teachers to curriculum that are marked by "personal initiative and intellectual engagement" (p.16). As she described it,

> Teacher agency in curriculum matters involves initiating the creation or critique of curriculum, an awareness of alternatives to established curriculum practices, the autonomy to make informed choices, an investment of self, and on-going interaction with others. (p.16)

Paris contrasted teacher 'agency' to a commonly held conception of teachers as consumers of curriculum, technical implementors of the ideas and products of experts. Teachers who conceptualize themselves as 'agents' look upon curriculum work as multi-faceted, involving many aspects of such processes as 'curriculum development', 'curriculum implementation', and 'curriculum evaluation'. Significantly, for the purposes of this study, the curriculum processes such teachers engage in is context-dependent, where teachers mutually construct curricula with learners.

Drawing on the common elements found in the way the terms 'autonomy' and 'agency' are used by the theorists cited above, I define the term 'autonomy' in this article as meaning the degree to which teachers have the ability or desire to make curriculum decisions using personal initiative and intellectual engagement. Although autonomous teachers might make use of the suggestions made by administrators or found within curriculum guidelines, they assume the principal responsibility for making curriculum implementation decisions within the classes they teach. It is this definition of 'autonomy' that I explored concretely in the study that I present here.

Changing Perceptions of the Instructor's Role in SLE

The historical context for this study was as important to establish as the theoretical. The first of these two was in relation to the perceived roles of instructors in curriculum development. Despite the influence of Palmer (1922) and later advocates of professionalism such as Strevens (1977), most SLE theory this century has been nearly obsessed with 'methods'. As Stern (1983) illustrated in his survey of language teaching theories, most 20th century ESL theoretical approaches have admonished the instructor to adopt a single pedagogical methodology. It has only been since the relatively recent break with the 'methods approach' that language teaching theorists have been able to discard simple formulas (Stern, 1983). There were many consequences of the 'methods approach'. One of the more serious, as Pennycook (1989) pointed out, is how it helped maintain inequalities between SLE theorists and practitioners. The strict distinction between instructors and experts (such as curriculum designers) blurred when the methods approach fell out of favor in the early 1980s.

The 'communicative approach' has become the most commonly accepted methodology for settlement language programs since the 1980s. This approach emphasizes the communicative aspect of teaching language, concentrating on function rather than form. As Allen and Widdowson (1979) state, the approach involves, "the learning of rules of use as well as rules of grammar" (p.141). Instructors are quite commonly directed to use the approach in curriculum and policy documents at both the national and local levels. A Canadian example of this kind of document is Citizenship and Immigration Canada's *Canadian Language Benchmarks* (1996).

An important implication of this approach has been to increase the responsibilities instructors have for curriculum development and implementation. For example, instructor-conducted needs assessments have become a hallmark of the way the 'communicative approach' has been applied in ESL programs in Canada, This, of course, shows the deep influence of Tyler's (1949) model on SLE and ESL. Curriculum guidelines for ESL programs in Canada often explicitly describe needs assessments as the foundation upon which instructors write curricula. Such curriculum guidelines specify expected attainment levels for ESL learners. Instructors implementing such curricula are expected to plan, develop and provide the actual curriculum in practice so that students meet these proficiency levels (Cumming, 1995).

Recent Changes in Canadian ESL

The second historical context I examined was in relation to Canadian ESL curriculum development. Change as a key factor in adult ESL curricula has been well documented in the field's research on classroom practices (Cumming, 1993); teacher education (Richards & Nunan, 1990); assessment (Bachman, 1990) and evaluation (Alderson & Beretta, 1992). However, little research has been conducted on what preferences ESL instructors have in terms of curriculum responsibilities, despite seemingly countless guidelines that advise instructors on teaching methodology and curriculum development. As Chaudron (1988) put it, "theories and claims about language teaching methods, effective curriculum, or the importance of learner characteristics have rarely been based on actual research in language classrooms" (p. xv). More recently, in a review of related literature prefacing his study on curriculum planning and innovation, Cumming (1993) stated that "little information is available to understand how language teachers' knowledge and thinking guide their pedagogical actions" (p.31). As Cumming pointed out, most other aspects of education have seen research that either documents teachers' personal knowledge (Clandinin, 1986; Elbaz, 1983), describes instructional planning (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Leinhardt, 1988; Yinger, 1980) or consists of longitudinal studies of teacher practices (Cumming, 1988; Hunnsaker & Johnson, 1992; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Roemer, 1991). Scarcely any such inquiry has been conducted in respect to curriculum practices in ESL teaching.

In the 1990s, various major initiatives in ESL curriculum development have emerged, associated with national language training programs in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. These national initiatives have formed important aspects of the economic strategies adopted by these countries. The Canadian 1991- 1995 Federal Immigration Plan, marked a major shift in immigration policy, arguing that increased immigration was required for economic growth into the new century and that the skills of immigrants were important resources to be exploited. These skills could only be effectively put to use for the nation through the development of more efficient and effective language training (Canada Employment and Immigration, 1994; Canada Employment and Immigration, 1991). In Canada this national training program is called Language Instruction to Newcomers to Canada (LINC).

A major document reporting on the consultation process the federal government engaged in related to LINC referred to the need for national consistency and standards for all ESL programs in the country (Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, 1991). Accordingly, the National Working Group on Language Benchmarks was set up in 1992 to usher in these new standards through a comprehensive proficiency assessment process. (Pierce and Stewart,1997). The development of assessment procedures also occurred in Australia, New Zealand and England. As Brindley (1995) described it,

> figuring prominently amongst the key indicators used for system-level monitoring and reporting in many education and training contexts are statements of program outcomes which describe expectations of learner performance standards at different levels of achievement. (p.1).

These performance standards, as Brindley pointed out, have a number of advantages and disadvantages. National standards ensure that: learners focus on language as a tool for communication; assessment is closely linked to instruction; teachers are able to make informed judgements about students' needs; better communication between stakeholders can take place; and there is an objective basis for determining program needs. However, the potential problems associated with these standards are threefold. Citing A. Hargreaves (1989), Brindley noted that "when assessment takes the form of constant observation and monitoring in relation to standards, it can become a form of surveillance" (Brindley, 1995, p.8). A second problem that Brindley observed, citing Moore, (1997) is that individual and contextual differences are submerged in such national documents that treat different educational contexts and learner groups in a common manner. The third set of problems were associated with test reliability, validity and logistics.

Such devolutions of curriculum responsibilities to instructors are far from simple or clear cut. In these new national ESL programs, instructors are expected to have assessment skills that they might very well lack. They are also expected to make these assessments within a nationally mandated curriculum framework that they may not understand or feel is appropriate to their situation. In Canada, the national LINC program replaced a patchwork of relatively different ESL programs that had developed locally in different parts of the country. The previous experiences of ESL instructors were therefore quite disparate. Many relied on their own holistic judgements in terms of student assessment. Others simply worked in institutions with standardized testing procedures that they had little to do with. As shown by a wealth of consultation reports, articles and submissions (Baril, 1993; Canada Employment and Immigration, 1993; Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, 1993; Teachers of English as a Second Language-- Toronto, 1993), some instructors felt empowered because they now had a new responsibility in the area of assessment and felt supported by new curriculum documents they liked. Others felt that they had been deskilled because they now had to adhere to a national set of curriculum and assessment procedures that they had objections to. With the historical and theoretical contexts established, I now turn to the actual study.

Research Methods

A case study approach was chosen for this study because it provided the best basis to approach to this thesis' research question: How do these instructors assess the value of their own autonomy over curriculum decision making? No previous research or theories existed that would have offered a basis to design research on this topic in this specific context. So the approach I had to adopt was necessarily exploratory, descriptive and preliminary. Various quantitative approaches were considered, but rejected because of the difficulty in determining research categories and descriptions that would be valid and appropriate to the context I wished to study. To prepare for the research, I first conducted a pilot study with two instructors working for a program similar to the one I was to study in the main research.

No basis was available on which I could select a case site that was truly representative of ESL instructors in Canada, but I considered it important that the instructors selected at least resemble the majority of adult ESL practitioners in Ontario. According to a recently completed survey of this population (Sanaoui, 1997), school board continuing education instructors, like the ones under study here, make up the largest category of ESL practitioners in Ontario. The instructors I chose to study were also typical in the sense that they work under contract and are paid close to the median wage.

In addition, the instructors at the site worked in conditions common in continuing education programs. There was a coordinator on site who was responsible for supervising and evaluating the teaching staff, conducting registration and intake, writing reports and maintaining statistics. The program had continuous enrolment and voluntary attendance. Clients often left and entered the program at any time during the term. There was also a minimum expectation for student enrolment. The instructors I studied also had training and experience that was close to the norm in these kinds of programs. All were female and had Bachelor degrees and TESL certificates. Of the five who participated in my study, two had Masters degrees, one directly related to SLE. Several had their Ontario teaching certificates. All but one had five or more years of adult ESL teaching experience. In referring to them later, to the site, and all other institutions, I have used pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality.

In the program where they were employed, these instructors were expected to develop their own curricula based on the needs of their learners. They were also responsible for all learner assessment after a client was placed in their classes. Except in a few cases, when outside agencies like welfare or employment insurance requested them, the teaching staff at this site had few record keeping responsibilities apart from submitting monthly attendance reports to their coordinator. Professional development opportunities were voluntary, and the instructors received no additional payment for attending them. These seem to be fairly typical working conditions for adult ESL instructors in Ontario.

I transcribed the interviews into 214 single-spaced pages. After much consideration, I chose turns in the interviews (ie., each speaker's verbal turn in the stretch of talk) as the unit of discourse segmentation for my analysis because I found that smaller discourse units were to be too difficult to define clearly or code reliably in the transcripts. All of the transcripts were segmented into each speaker's turns in the interview conversations.

The data were coded in two passes. In the first, I marked references made to selected curriculum topics. The data were multiple-coded, that is, I assigned many of the curriculum topics to each turn as seemed logically appropriate. Turns were marked whenever a reference to any of the categories of codes appeared. Most of the marked turns had references to only one or two codes. Few had more than four, although there were several that had references to seven. In this way, I reduced the qualitative data to quantifiable sets of categories to facilitate my analyses. At the commencement of coding the data, I performed an inter-rater reliability check with a Ph.D. student at OISE. We each independently coded two interviews, a sample that represented 20% of the data. We agreed on 90.8% of the coding. As a result, I concluded that the coding scheme was reliable.

Once the marked turns had been sorted from the rest of the data, I performed a second coding of the interview transcripts. This consisted of coding the turns marked in the first pass according to whether or not they contained opinions about who should make curriculum implementation decisions. Turns were marked with a '+', or positive, if the instructor indicated a desire for autonomy regarding the category in question. Turns were marked with a '—', or negative, if the instructor indicated a desire for someone else to make decisions regarding this category. This coding was thus my operational definition of preferences for instructor autonomy in curriculum decision making. The references to each code in each of the turns were then sorted and arranged as shown in Table 2. There was a total of 262 references to these codes about autonomy across all of the marked turns about curriculum topics.

Summary of Findings

The findings from the analyses of the interview data can be summarized as follows:

- The clear tendency was for the instructors to express the desire for autonomy in most of the coded categories.
- All of the instructors wanted autonomy over the selection of materials and activities.
- A full range of opinions regarding autonomy was expressed about all the other coded categories: assessment of learner proficiency, curriculum guidelines, linguistic content, needs assessment, professional development, relations with other staff, and themes. Most wanted autonomy in these categories. Some clearly did not.

A few cautions are in order in the presentation of this data. No attempt was made to standardize the length of the interviews or the responses in this study, and the number of people I interviewed was small and not necessarily representative of the instructors even at this one site. For these reasons, I have not attempted to make comparisons between instructors or *across* codes. In the discussion which follows, my interpretations are based on a comparison of the distribution of codes *within* coded categories.

The five instructors who participated in this study generally wanted and experienced relatively high levels of autonomous control over the curriculum decisions pertinent to their classes. In the interviews, the total number of coded turns which were positive in respect to autonomy outnumbered those that were negative, by a ratio of almost four to one. The desire for autonomy was far from uniform, however.

All of the instructors felt that they should have control over choosing classroom activities. This category had the second highest ratio of positive to negative marked turns: 13.5 to 1. Some of the more adamant remarks in favor of autonomous control were also in reference to this topic. Apostrophe repeatedly emphasized how jealously she guarded her control over choosing classroom activities. Hamnet went further than most of her colleagues in saying that she wanted control over the type of teaching methodology. Ingrid and Janet expressed their desire for autonomy in this area despite the fact that that this meant a lot more work on their part. Kwacha was less adamant in this regard, but she still resisted any notion of an imposed set of activities.

When discussing curriculum guidelines, it was clear that all of the instructors accepted them as necessary and potentially supportive. All of the instructors were concerned lest the guideline become a straight jacket, however. Positive marked turns outnumbered negative ones by a ratio of 4.7 to 1. The instructors clearly expressed the desire for a flexible document that allowed them to build specific curricula for particular groups of learners. Although Apostrophe felt that it was important that a guideline establish clear entrance and exit criteria for each level, she reserved the right to go beyond what a guideline might specify if her learners needed it. Hamnet stated that, although she welcomed the kinds of suggestions a guideline might make, she wanted to be able to skip anything that didn't apply to her class. Ingrid used the guideline as her starting point, but she also emphasized that a guideline which was carved in stone would hinder her ability to meet her learners' needs. Janet had perhaps the most independent attitude towards guidelines, using them chiefly as reference points for her own curriculum work. Since the particular guideline in use at Rosewood had little to say about literacy, Kwacha had little choice but to develop her own curriculum. Even so, she spoke positively about other curriculum guidelines in terms of the choices and options they presented.

In their discussions about linguistic elements, the instructors expressed similar opinions to those about guidelines. Positive turns outnumbered negatives one by a ratio of 5.6 to 1. None of the instructors had any problems being told what linguistic elements to cover in class as long as they had the freedom to augment or modify them. Apostrophe used the grammar list in the *Green Book* as a checklist, but she regularly covered elements specified for other levels when she felt it was necessary. Hamnet felt that she had little choice in this regard, given the different levels of English proficiency in the computeracy class. Ingrid was the instructor who most closely followed the guidelines as far as this aspect of her curriculum decision making was concerned. She still felt, however, that each class was different and required a slightly different approach towards grammar. Janet described her attitude in a way that was similar to Apostrophe's. Kwacha saw choosing linguistic elements as a matter of finding a compromise between a guideline might abstractly prescribe and what the learners actually needed.

Choosing materials was another of the coded categories in which the all instructors wanted autonomous control. It had the highest ratio of positive to negative turns: 14 to 1. All of the instructors noted that they welcomed suggestions, but felt that only they could ensure that the materials in use matched the needs of the learners. Apostrophe and Janet extended this further when they said that they were used to making their own material and rarely used commercial texts. Although they did note a few exceptions, by and large they were critical of most commercially produced material. None of the instructors supported the notion of a 'core' or 'course text' for a class or program. Hamnet noted that she had to carefully select a variety of materials for her class, given the multilevel aspect of the English component. Ingrid noted that it was a lot of work to produce one's own material, but that it was important to do so. Kwacha echoed this, emphasizing the difficulty she had finding good materials for her literacy class.

There was an interesting range of opinions among the instructors regarding needs assessment. Although the overall number of positive turns outnumbered negative ones by a ratio of 3.1 to 1, one of the instructors felt that she would prefer it if someone else took responsibility for this task. Apostrophe noted that, in an ideal situation, learners should be assessed before they entered the classroom, both in terms of settlement needs and English language proficiency. Hamnet agreed with this, having in mind a process in which learners were asked to fill out questionnaires when they initially registered. Ingrid felt that she would welcome a tool that would help her conduct the needs assessment, but she felt that it should remain as an integral part of her work. Kwacha felt that the lack of formal education experienced by her learners meant that she had to conduct needs assessments herself. Janet was not as adamant, but still felt that it should remain as part of an instructor's responsibilities. Complex issues of efficiency, quality of information and coordination of curricula throughout the overall ESL program is featured here.

Of all the code categories, assessment of learner proficiency had the lowest positive to negative ratio: 1.3 to 1. Most of the instructors, in fact, said that instructors should be relieved of much of the responsibility for testing and assessing English proficiency. They seemed to defer to testing experts and common standards. They also pointed out limitations in their own work schedules. Some of the same arguments were used in regards this matter as were used in discussions regarding needs assessment. Apostrophe clearly saw the difference between the two kinds of assessment, but she was even more adamantly in favor of having someone else take on this responsibility. Neither Hamnet nor Ingrid had strong opinions regarding this issue. Ingrid noted that some previous testing experiments she had conducted had been very time consuming. Janet mentioned the Canadian Language Benchmarks in her discussion, expressing the opinion that this task should be left to someone specifically trained to test in reference to the benchmarks. Kwacha was in the minority on this topic, again because her learners were not used to formal testing or assessment. However, she did state that initial language assessment should be done by the coordinator of the program before the learner entered the classroom. She also said that it might be better for instructors working at other proficiency levels to surrender this responsibility.

Professional development was a coding category that was not mentioned very often during the interviews. Turns marked positive in terms of teacher autonomy outnumbered ones marked negative by a ratio of 3 to 1. In general, all of the instructors felt that they would like to be given a choice of professional development opportunities and to make their own decisions about whether to make use of them. They all said that professional development was important. As discussed below, this category did capture some interesting remarks that might not have surfaced otherwise. However, the interviews didn't shed too much light on the actual topic of professional development.

In regards to their relations to other staff members, all of the instructors remarked that it was very important to keep in close contact with their colleagues and that they tried to do this. Turns marked positive in terms of teacher autonomy outnumbered ones marked negative by a ratio of 2.6 to 1. Hamnet had some interesting things to say about a private provider she recently had worked for and how the profit motive there had been constraining and thus detrimental to staff relations and, in turn, the students' learning. Janet expressed an interest in taking on more responsibility in regards to dealing with relevant, outside agencies. Ingrid gave a well thought-out argument as to why instructors should be responsible for conducting program evaluation.

Most of the instructors wanted responsibility over thematic content. The ratio of positive to negative turns in this category was 2.8 to 1. Apostrophe felt strongly about this issue, saying that she should be supplied with the materials to teach any prescribed theme. In one sense, Hamnet's course concentrated on one theme: computeracy. In another sense, in terms of commonly taught settlement topics such as 'housing' or 'shopping', thematic content formed very little of what Hamnet covered. Ingrid felt that instructors had to control the choice of thematic content if classes were to be learner centered. Janet expressed much the same opinion. Kwacha was the only instructor who expressed a need for more guidance in this area.

Discussion and Implications

ESL instructors working for Canadian settlement language programs serve a diverse clientele. Continuous enrollment, a common feature of these programs, means that the instructors often never know exactly who or how many learners they will face at the beginning of a lesson. Every learner has different motivations, abilities and skills. They gain English language proficiency at different rates of speed for reasons that are not easy to pinpoint. There is also a wide diversity of the types of programs in which ESL instruction is offered. All of these factors effect instruction and curriculum planning.

Canadian ESL instructors also work in a wide variety of circumstances. Classes might be held in comfortable surroundings, with a wealth of resources and supports, and plenty of opportunities for interaction with colleagues; or they might be held in cramped quarters that are completely isolated, with only the resources that the instructor can carry in his or her briefcase. These factors effect the ability of instructors to take a professional attitude towards their work.

This diversity places a high degree of curriculum responsibility on an ESL instructor working in this milieu. Curricula must be more individualized and designed for specific purposes. Individual instructor decision making in curriculum implementation therefore becomes key. In this study, it was clear that the instructors wanted autonomy over most aspects of the curriculum implementation process. There were important nuances, however. All of the instructors wanted autonomy over the choice of materials and activities. For the most part, these instructors were adamant on this point. In regards to the other 7 coded categories, there was a greater range of opinions. Overall, the instructors still wanted autonomy regarding assessment of learner proficiency, needs assessment, curriculum guidelines, linguistic content, professional development, relations with other staff, and themes. The desire for 'autonomy' in these aspects of curriculum development was not uniform across the coded categories or between instructors.

'Autonomy', especially when it incorporates 'agency' is a fundamental attribute for adult ESL instructors who work in Canadian settlement language programs. These instructors must be able to make curriculum implementation decisions with a fair degree of latitude, especially when the programs in which they work are based upon the dynamic curriculum model developed by Tyler (1949) and which contain the multitude of options inherent in the 'communicative approach'. They can not afford to simply exercise technical expertise. In order to ensure quality of ESL instruction, policy makers, program administrators and curriculum developers must support measures that enhance instructor 'autonomy'.

The research in this article suggests that ESL instructors need curriculum support in a variety of areas to enhance their 'autonomy'. The majority of the participants in this study wanted curriculum guidelines that gave them sets of options and suggestions from which to choose, especially in terms of linguistic and thematic content. Although the majority greatly valued their freedom to choose activities and materials for the classroom, they often expressed frustration regarding the lack of time they had to prepare materials and activities. Some of the instructors expressed the same frustration over their lack of time to perform assessment, either in terms of learner needs or English proficiency. In this regard, support might come in two ways: either by having someone else do assessment, particularly in the case of English proficiency, or by greatly enhancing their abilities to perform these tasks through professional development.

All of the instructors said that they needed more professional development opportunities and the chance to interact with their colleagues. Professional development is one of the more obvious ways in which 'autonomy' can be enhanced. Enhancing the chances that instructors have to interact is not as obvious, but just as important. When instructors interact as autonomous professionals, they exchange ideas, seek advice, and help build up each other's morale. This, in turn, strengthens the programs in which they work and helps the students they teach.

SLE curriculum theory and research should therefore develop from its present concentration on system-based approaches (Johnson, 1989; Clark,1987; Markee, 1997) and explore questions related to individual agency and autonomy. Although this concentration has been very valuable, it can't come to grips with a number of questions related to daily practice. How do individual instructors work with colleagues in terms of curriculum development and implementation? Are there aspects of curriculum processes that instructors feel more strongly about than others? What is the reaction of individual instructors to large scale curriculum innovation?

The implications for ESL curriculum practice are also distinct. In view of the importance of teacher agency and autonomy to the curriculum development process, it is imperative that ways of enhancing them be explored. What are the other supports needed in other contexts that supports instructor 'autonomy'? Is systematic professional development the best way to enhance 'autonomy'? How can collegiality be strengthened? How do working conditions affect 'autonomy' or 'agency'?

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Instructor Autonomy in Curriculum Decision Making:
A Study of an Adult ESL Settlement Program

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the views held by 5 adult English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors about their processes of curriculum implementation in a Canadian settlement language program. Its central research question is: How do these instructors assess the value of their own autonomy over curriculum decision making? Data were collected though a series of interviews that I used to identify key themes and issues.

I drew on theoretical definitions of 'autonomy', 'agency', and 'curriculum decision making', and the historical and conceptual history of the teaching situation. I then analyzed these data to apply the issue of teacher autonomy, prominent in general education theory, to this teaching situation.

The study reveals the concerns of a group of instructors at the point of their implementation of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB). It makes the case for developing program supports for instructor 'autonomy' and demonstrates the usefulness of this concept theoretically.

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Chapter 1. Introduction and Theoretical Background

This thesis examines the views held by 5 adult English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors about their processes of curriculum implementation in a Canadian settlement language program. Its central research question is: How do these instructors assess the value of their own autonomy over curriculum decision making? The research establishes what the concept of 'teacher autonomy' is in this context and argues its importance in conceiving how this curriculum situation operates.

Organization of the Thesis

The first chapter of this thesis provides an introduction to the issues it explores and the theoretical background informing the study. The second chapter outlines the methods and rationale used for the research, the pilot study, and how I chose the participants. It then accounts for how the interview data were collected, managed and analyzed. The third chapter describes the site of the research, the instructors, the curriculum documents in use in this context, and the classroom observations I conducted. The fourth chapter analyzes the interview data, outlining the distribution of coded turns, summarizing the comments made by the participants and presenting the study's principal findings. The final chapter defines what 'autonomy' appears to be in the context of adult ESL instruction, suggesting implications for research, curriculum development and program planning.

The introductory chapter for this thesis has six sections. After initially stating the research question framing the study, the second gives an overview of some of the important changes affecting the work of the instructors in the study and, in this context of change, provides a rationale as to why inquiry into issues of instructor autonomy are important for theorists and practitioners alike. The next two sections broadly define two key concepts integral to the research: 'autonomy' and 'curriculum decision-making'. A third term, 'agency', is explored with reference to autonomy. The chapter then turns to the historical context of autonomy in two further sections; the first from the perspective of education in general and the second from the perspective of ESL in particular. The introductory chapter concludes with a broad examination of the changes currently at work in adult ESL.

This study was conducted during a time of change for the instructors at this site. A major curriculum innovation, the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), was being implemented nationally in all settlement ESL programs sponsored by the federal government. The site pertaining to this study was one of the first to make use of the assessment procedures associated with the CLB, later formulated as the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA, Pierce and Stewart, 1997). In fact, six months after the data presented below were collected, every learner at this site was assessed using the CLBA. These instructors worked for a school board continuing education department that was not part of any national or provincial ESL program. The chief characteristics of this ESL program are discussed in detail in the section describing the selection of this case in Chapter 2. As is common in such programs, the curriculum documents and assessment procedures these instructors used were unique to their institution. The CLBA, being a standard assessment framework and set of procedures conceived for use throughout Canada, represented a major change for the instructors at this site.

In my study, I asked these instructors to talk at length about some essential steps in their curriculum decision making: selecting materials, conducting needs assessments, designing classroom activities, choosing linguistic elements, and deciding which themes to cover. They were also asked to talk in general about how they viewed curriculum guidelines, relations with other staff members, and professional development. As is described below, the instructors in this study did not view autonomy or curriculum decision making uniformly. The instructors expressed similar opinions in regards to some aspects of curriculum decision making. In regards to other aspects, a full range of opinions were voiced. Nuances and patterns emerged which I have tried to document in this thesis.

To be successful, innovations like the CLB and the CLBA must take into account the skills and attitudes of the teaching staff responsible for implementation. As Markee (1997) put it, "educational change involves addressing the short and long-term professionalization of teachers, on whom real, long-lasting change in the classroom always depends" (p.4). Instructors must support the changes called for by innovation and have the skills required to implement them. Without these two factors, curriculum reform stops at the classroom door. It is hoped that the present study will assist instructors and administrators in understanding these matters more fully so that they can deal with these innovations by identifying potential pitfalls and implementing some of the professional development requirements needed to support curriculum innovation. Theoretically, I hope that this thesis will contribute to an understanding of the processes involved in curriculum decision making and initiate further inquiry into the question of instructor autonomy, particularly in the context of adult ESL, where, as is discussed below, it has received little attention to date.

Teacher Autonomy

In second language education (SLE) theory, the term 'autonomy' is commonly applied to two different but related phenomena: language and learning. Spolsky defined the term in reference to language situations when speakers believe, "that their language is an independent one, usually with a name of its own" (Spolsky, 1989, p. 133). Holec, (1981) cited by Stern (1983, p.513n) used the term in reference to self-directed learning, where students are encouraged to become more and more self-reliant, eventually able to learn without the help of a teacher.

Less commonly and more recently, however, the term 'autonomy' has been used to describe the degree to which teachers make independent curriculum decisions. This usage of the term is commonly found in the field of general education, but seldom in ESL or SLE. When the term 'autonomy' does appear in the first of these fields, teachers' control of curriculum decisions is often contrasted against that of administrators who manage or supervise them. Helsby and McCulloch (1996), for example, used 'autonomy' when describing struggles over curriculum control that occurred in Britain in the 1960s between teachers and the government of the day. They contend that, "throughout the 1960s, high expectations of teacher autonomy with regard to the curriculum were generally maintained" (p.57). In their arguments, they use the term 'autonomy' when discussing the curriculum control exerted by teachers; they contrast this through the use of terms like 'intervention' when referring to administrators.

Other theorists have employed the term 'autonomy' in similar ways. Dale (1989) described two forms of autonomy. The first is called 'licensed autonomy' and describes a situation in which a credentialed professional is given complete freedom from bureaucratic control. The second is called 'regulated autonomy' and describes the situation where a credentialed professional is closely monitored. Robertson (1996) made extensive use of Dale's terms when she observed that the 'licensed autonomy' of Australian teachers was being eroded as a result of recent changes in government education policy. Lawn (1996) used the term 'autonomy' when he examined the history of curriculum control in 20th century Britain. Lawn described how teacher autonomy was an integral part of the extension of professional status to teachers for the purpose of exerting indirect control over curriculum. A. Hargreaves (1994) recommended that the 'self-protective autonomy' of present day teachers be replaced with 'occupational heteronomy', in which teachers work collaboratively with other partners in the wider community (A. Hargreaves, 1994).

It is worth noting that autonomy is not always a positive attribute. D. Hargreaves (1982), for example, makes the case that autonomy "is the polite word used to mask teachers' evaluative apprehension and to serve as the rationale for excluding outsiders" (p.206). Although this perspective does not form part of the definition developed here, it is an important one to bear in mind when considering the findings below.

A key concept for understanding how autonomy operates is the term 'agency', as developed by Paris (1993). Drawing on theorists such as Arendt (1958) and Greene (1978), Paris used 'agency' when characterizing relationships of teachers to curriculum that are marked by "personal initiative and intellectual engagement" (p.16). As she described it,

> Teacher agency in curriculum matters involves initiating the creation or critique of curriculum, an awareness of alternatives to established curriculum practices, the autonomy to make informed choices, an investment of self, and on-going interaction with others. (p.16)

Paris contrasted teacher 'agency' to a commonly held conception of teachers as consumers of curriculum, technical implementors of the ideas and products of experts. Teachers who conceptualize themselves as 'agents' look upon curriculum work as multi-faceted, involving many aspects of such processes as 'curriculum development', 'curriculum implementation', and 'curriculum evaluation'. Significantly, for the purposes of this study, the curriculum processes such teachers engage in is context-dependent, where teachers mutually construct curricula with learners.

Drawing on the common elements found in the way the terms 'autonomy' and 'agency' are used by the theorists cited above, I define the term 'autonomy' in this thesis as meaning the degree to which teachers have the ability or desire to make curriculum decisions using personal initiative and intellectual engagement. Although autonomous teachers might make use of the suggestions made by administrators or found within curriculum guidelines, they assume the principal responsibility for making curriculum implementation decisions within the classes they teach. I will return to this definition in the concluding chapter of this thesis in order to particularize it in the context of Canadian settlement language programs. In light of the research presented below, I argue that instructor 'autonomy' is a key element for successful ESL curriculum implementation and that it should be supported in curriculum development and program planning.

Curriculum Decision-Making

What do these instructors make decisions about in implementing their curricula? The term 'curriculum' is far from unproblematic, having been interpreted by theorists in many different ways. Related terms such as 'teaching methodology', 'syllabus design', 'curriculum' development' and 'curriculum implementation' have also been subjects of debate. Defining 'curriculum decision making' in this context means first coming to an understanding of what 'curriculum' is.

Tyler, the most long-standing influential curriculum theorist in general education, notes in a discussion subsequent to his famous model (Tyler, 1949, see the second quotation below for its key elements), that there are two ways to interpret the term curriculum:

> in its most limited sense, it is an outline of a course of study. At the other extreme, curriculum is considered to be everything that transpires in the planning, teaching and learning in an educational institution. (Tyler, 1981, p.17)

In reference to the second of these two definitions, Tyler outlined a process of four major tasks that serve,

> as the focuses of curriculum construction: the selection and definition of learning objectives; the selection and creation of appropriate learning experiences; the organization of the learning experiences to achieve a maximum cumulative effect; and the evaluation of the curriculum to furnish a continuing basis for necessary revisions and desirable improvements. (Tyler, 1981, p.24)

SLE theorists make similar distinctions. In his discussions about curriculum, Stern (1992) differentiated between the use of the term when it refers to an overall program of study for a school and when it is used to describe what is taught in a given subject. This latter definition, "usually involves at least three aspects: a) defining objectives, b) determining content, and c) indicating some sort of sequence or progression" (Stern, 1992, p.19).

As the examples above illustrate, one of the principal conceptions of curriculum has a dynamic dimension, involving a series of tasks and decisions. In this conception, a curriculum is not a static document prescribing what should be done in the classroom. It is the performance of these dynamic tasks, in fact, which constitutes curriculum implementation.

The conception of curriculum implementation as a set of decision-making processes is realized even further in Johnson's (1989) model for a coherent language curriculum. He defined the term curriculum, "in its broadest sense, to include all the relevant decision-making processes of all the participants" (p.1). In Johnson's model the question of who makes these decisions is of utmost importance. He compared and contrasted three approaches to participant roles in policy determination and implementation. In the first, the 'specialist' approach, a hierarchical chain of command separates different participants who have different responsibilities for decision-making. Needs analysts determine syllabus goals, material writers make materials, and teachers implement teaching acts. There is little communication between the levels of this hierarchy that is not top-down. Johnson's second approach, the 'learner-centered', is the opposite in the sense that all the participants, particularly students and teachers, are involved at every stage of decision making. The 'integrated' approach, Johnson's third, allows all the participants to have an awareness of all the curriculum decisions being made, but responsibility only over the ones they are best positioned and qualified to make. Communication and input goes both up and down the levels. Johnson's model focuses on the 'policy level' that Stern (1992) defined (the level of control, overall planning and decision making), and not on teaching and learning activities in the classroom that Stern (1992) called the 'practical action level'. Nevertheless, his discussion of the roles played in the curriculum decision-making process is relevant and useful here.

In the context of communicative language teaching, the predominant orientation in ESL education in Canada over the past two decades, many of the distinctions between planning and execution seem to have fallen away. Nunan, in a popular textbook designed for teacher training, outlined a series of tasks involved in curriculum development. He noted that, traditionally, there has been a distinction between 'syllabus design' and 'methodology', "the former concerning itself with the selection and grading of linguistic and experiential content, the latter with the selection and sequencing of learning tasks and activities"(Nunan, 1991, p. 2).This distinction no longer seems to apply to current practice, however. Nunan cited Breen's contention that this distinction can no longer be sustained in the context of communicative language teaching. This is because, pedagogically, the activity of learning the language has become as important as the language itself. Consequently, teachers involve themselves in organizing activities for their students that engage them actively in communicating in the language they are learning; these activities often form the curriculum, rather than a pre-ordained syllabus of language items that teachers teach and students practice and study, as in earlier conceptions of syllabi for language education. Curriculum designers must "give priority to the changing processes of learning and the potential of the classroom" (Breen, 1984, p.52).

The question remains, however, as to what degree teachers should be curriculum designers, especially if classroom processes form an integral part of curricula. Clark (1987) helped put this question into perspective when he outlined three 'value systems' commonly found in foreign language teaching historically: 'classical humanism', 'reconstructionism' and 'progressivism'. For the purposes of this study, there are several important distinctions he makes in regards to the three systems in terms of curriculum development, or 'curriculum renewal' as he terms it. In both the 'classical humanism' and 'reconstructionism' systems, the curriculum is renewed from the top down, with outside agencies initiating change. Teachers are expected to simply implement the changes recommended by either an examination board and inspectorate, in the case of the first system, or a committee of experts, in the case of the second. Clark's third value system, 'progressivism', contains a different conception of who is responsible for the tasks in curriculum development. Renewal is bottom-up and school-based. The teacher is the agent of change, either individually or collectively. As is demonstrated below, aspects of this value system is inherent in the curriculum situation and documents used by the instructors in the present study.

Perceptions regarding the roles played by instructors in curriculum development remain complex, however. In another popular teacher training manual, Brown (1994) deferred any discussion pertaining to the definition of curriculum because he assumes that his readers will not be primarily concerned with writing curricula. Speaking directly to teachers in training, Brown noted that he assumed that the primary task of his readers will be the "following of an established curriculum and adapting to it in terms of your particular group of students, their needs, and their goals, as well as your own philosophy of teaching" (p. 401). Interestingly, even though Brown was explicit in his depiction of teachers as implementers and not designers of curricula, the role he assigns them is certainly dynamic. Nunan (1991) also assigned an active curriculum role to the novice instructors he counsels, stating that one of his goals in writing his textbook was to help teachers "identify what works for them and their learners, in their own particular context" (p. xiv).

Markee's (1997) recent work on curriculum innovation is also interesting in terms of the division of tasks and responsibilities. Basing himself on Candlin (1984), Markee posited three levels of curriculum innovation planning in the project he studied. Long-term 'strategic planning' had the largest scope and was the purview of the project director or change agent. Medium-term 'tactical planning' consisted of syllabus design decisions made through negotiation between the teachers and the project director. Short-term 'operational planning' was syllabus implementation decisions made through negotiations between teachers and students. The teachers in Markee's study were far from being simple implementers of curriculum innovation. Markee described a process in which "the program director and the teachers negotiate the content and methodology of materials, which yields a syllabus of task-based units. Teachers try these units in class and negotiate unit content and methodology further with students" (p.24).

In sum, it is the view of most recent theorists in SLE that curriculum decision-making is a dynamic process which constitutes curriculum implementation and the overall situation of language teaching. Within this process, participants have specific roles to play. In the system orientated models proposed by Johnson, Clark and Markee, there are no automatic or clear cut divisions between someone who plans curricula and someone who executes it. The dynamics of decision-making are integral to the actual process that instructors engage in when implementing curricula.

Changing Perceptions of Teacher Autonomy in Education

It is axiomatic to say that the only real constant in life is change. Examples of current societal change are not difficult to cite: the rapidity of the collapse of the Soviet Union; the intensification of ecological crisis; and the globalization of trade. Many social theorists, including those in education, contend that the changes we are experiencing mark a fundamental shift that permeates every aspect of life. A. Hargreaves, for example, citing social theorists such as Foucault, Giddens and Habermas, contended that, "what is at work in the construction of current patterns of educational change is a powerful and dynamic struggle between two immense social forces: those of modernity and those of postmodernity" (p.165).

Of course, education has always been affected by the forces in society. As Kliebard (1988) pointed out, fundamental societal change intensifies debates about the methods and goals of education. The history of these debates goes all the way back to the time of Aristotle, who noted that,

> at present, opinion is divided about the subjects of education. All do not take the same view about what should be learned by the young... If we look at actual practice, the result is sadly confusing; it throws no light on the problem. (Aristotle, *Politics*, cited in Kleibard, 1988, p.19).

A quick perusal of the selections in any large bookshop shows that curriculum is still a popular and controversial topic in public discourse. Numerous bestsellers decry the present state of schooling and recommend a variety of prescriptions to cure its ills, most concentrating on course content and assessment.

Central to all these debates about change in education is the question of the role that teachers play in determining curricula. Again, this is not new. It is a debate as old as the one about whether or not Socrates corrupted the youth of Athens. Much of this debate focuses on the role schools play in society and how much control the state should exercise in advancing its interests in the classroom. In western philosophical discourse, calls for reform in terms of curriculum content have been commonplace. The role teachers play in this respect is often not dealt with, however. In many discussions, educators are generally called upon to simply implement whatever program is envisioned. Plato and Rousseau are prime examples of philosophers who neglected this issue while devoting much energy to discussions about education in general.

Similarly, even though education is often seen as a key factor in societal reform, there is little recognition of the competing demands usually made on schools. In a sense, conceptions of curriculum planning are often monolithic, with strictures about course content and methodology passed down from state to administrator to teacher. Durkhiem is a prime example of this trend, stressing the need for teachers to pass down a moral code to their pupils for the betterment of the nation. He emphasized that "schoolmasters must be shown what new ideals they should pursue and encourage their pupils to pursue, for that is the great desideratum of our moral situation" (Durkheim, *L'Année Sociologique, Vol. IV*, as cited in Lukes, 1973, p.355).

A different attitude towards curriculum development came to the fore in western democracies with the arrival of the twentieth century. A new emphasis on an individually responsible citizenship meant that education had to be more concerned with individual needs within a democratic framework. There could no longer be a monolithic attitude towards curriculum development. As Lundgren (1988) pointed out, this trend coincided with the advent of modernism, the industrial revolution and modern conceptions of the state. The state extended universal suffrage and primary education. Dewey (1916) summarized the functions that this new form of education must have when he said that a democratic society, "must have the type of education which gives individuals personal interests in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder" (p.99). Diversity had to be part of the means and ends of this form of modern schooling. Monolithic curriculum development no longer had a place, for,

> a progressive society counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means of its own growth. Hence, a democratic society must, in consistency with its ideal, allow for intellectual freedom and the play of diverse gifts and interests in its educational measures.(Dewey, 1916, p.305)

This promotion of diverse curricula for specific goals was the starting point for the subsequent trend of student-centered curriculum in North America. This trend was extended by curriculum theorists such as Tyler (1949) into systematic processes which emphasized needs assessments, the development of specific goals, the organization of content, and the importance of program evaluation. As is shown below, the curriculum documents commonly in use in the milieu I studied owe a lot to Tyler's model. The need for diversified curricula also features in the work of critical educators, such as Freire (1973) or Aronowitz and Giroux (1985), although their emphasis on diversity is in terms of social class rather than individuals.

Recently, many general educational theorists have been preoccupied by how teacher professionalism is affected by the forces of societal change (Apple, 1995; Apple & Jungck, 1990; Apple & Teitelbaum 1986; Egan, 1988; Fitzclarence & Kenway, 1993;

Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Helsby & McCulloch, 1996; Jones & Moore, 1991; Kliebard, 1988; Lawn, 1996; Knight, Lingard, & Porter, 1993; Lundgren, 1988; Paris, 1993; Robertson, 1996). As is illustrated below, three of these authors (Lawn, Apple, and Paris) in particular have focused on the complicated, and at times contradictory, forces of societal change in terms of their implications for teacher autonomy.

Lawn (1996), examining the recent history of education in England, argued that "the period between the 1920s and 1990s constitutes a distinct phase in state education which has come to an end" (p.2). The new phase is characterized by, "the imposition of curriculum and assessment reforms, new inspection systems and the decentralized management of people and their work" (ibid.). The management of education in England was explicitly remodeled, through measures such as the 1988 Education Reform Act, to reflect principles of the market economy. Curriculum control underwent major devolution to local educational authorities for the express purpose of responding to local market needs. Teachers now have greater individual responsibilities for specialized assessment and curriculum development tasks within the restraints of locally developed guidelines. The resulting effect on the teachers' work has been twofold. Citing an empirical study by Campbell, Evans, St. J. Neill, and Packwood (1991), Lawn stated that, on the one hand, teachers were experiencing a greater sense of empowerment associated with the acquisition of new skills and responsibilities. On the other hand, teachers were becoming progressively fragmented, acting as isolated specialists within a labor market in which they must sell their skills.

The organization of education has also changed recently in the United States in similar ways. Citing Castells (1980), Apple (1995) contended that management practices in the overall economy are fundamentally shifting in response to economic change. Apple sees a complicated process of deskilling and reskilling at work. On the one hand, management attempts to "separate conception from execution" (p.130) by redefining the division of labor. To put it simply, workers execute the plans set by management within the parameters they are given. On the other hand, this redivision of labor means that workers have to be trained in newly required and specialized skills. Apple recognized that this pattern has existed within the larger economy for quite some time. Patterns within education, however, are somewhat different. As he put it,

> given the relatively autonomous nature of teaching (one can usually close one's door and not be disturbed) and given the internal history of the kinds of control in the institution (paternalistic styles of administration, often in the USA based on gender relations), the school has been partially resistant to technical and bureaucratic control, at the level of practice, until relatively recently. (Apple, 1995, p.130)

Apple used the example of the ascendancy of pre-packaged curricular materials in the United States. These spell out the curriculum in great detail, right down to the actual materials to be used and the objectives to be sought on a daily basis. Like Lawn, Apple noted that teachers, increasingly divorced from overall planning, are becoming isolated specialists and technicians.

Paris (1993) pointed out that teacher 'agency' was a hallmark of Dewey's Laboratory School early this century, and has been characteristic of numerous curriculum projects in the United States since. However, the overall trend in the United States since the 1920s has been a restriction in teacher agency, rationalization of school management, and a deferral to curriculum experts. This has coincided with what Apple (1986) called the 'feminization' of teaching, a dramatic increase in female participation in the profession. In the 1950s and 1960s, the deferral to curriculum experts culminated in the concept of the 'teacher-proof curricula', where curriculum experts sought to go over the heads of teachers directly to children (Silberman, 1970). Teachers were seen as technicians who, as often as not, diverted or even obstructed curriculum development and implementation. Paris pointed out that since the 1980s many foundations and government agencies in the United States have called for educational reform, some calling for heightened teacher agency, others the converse. She cited the National Coalition of Advocates for Children (1985) as stating that 22 states in the United States restricted teachers' abilities to make curriculum decisions as a result of a national education commission report in 1983.

One further trend is worth noting in the context of the present thesis. According to A. Hargreaves (1989a), a renewed emphasis on assessment and testing is one of the key forces driving many of the recent changes in education and teacher professionalism. As he put it, "assessment, more than curriculum or pedagogy, has been the prime focal point for educational change. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that the 1980s has been the era of assessment-led educational reform"(p.41). As is shown below, assessment has a key place in the curricula for recent national ESL programs worldwide. It is also significant that the first aspect of the CLB to be introduced at the site under study here is the CLBA, the assessment component of the Canadian program.

Changing Perceptions of Teacher Autonomy in SLE

Historically, most second language education theorists and program administrators have regarded instructors as technical implementers of fully developed curricula with few formal responsibilities for curriculum writing. Theoretical innovations for language instruction have more often than not been accompanied by detailed teaching materials and methodological manuals. Some examples of the texts in this tradition prior to 1900 are Berlitz's *The Berlitz Method* (1888), and Sweet's *The Practical Study of Languages* (1899).

Palmer (1922) was the first major SLE theoretician to describe language instructors as having a formal role in curriculum implementation. Through his principles of 'proportion' and a 'multiple line of approach', Palmer counseled instructors to choose materials and teaching strategies appropriate to specific circumstances and objectives. These principles were the concrete expression of Palmer's strong advocacy for professionalism among language instructors, "which he, more than any other single individual, had helped to bring about" (Howatt, 1984, p.230).

Despite the influence of Palmer and later advocates of professionalism such as Strevens (1977), most SLE theory this century has been nearly obsessed with 'methods'. As Stern (1983) illustrated in his survey of language teaching theories, most 20th century ESL theoretical approaches have admonished the instructor to adopt a single pedagogical methodology. It has only been since the relatively recent break with the 'methods approach' that language teaching theorists have been able to discard simple formulas (Stern, 1983). There were many consequences of the 'methods approach'. One of the more serious, as Pennycook (1989) pointed out, is how it helped maintain inequalities between SLE theorists and practitioners (Pennycook, 1989). The strict distinction between instructors and experts (such as curriculum designers) blurred when the methods approach fell out of favor in the early 1980s.

The 'communicative approach' has become the most commonly accepted methodology for settlement language programs since the 1980s. This approach emphasizes the communicative aspect of teaching language, concentrating on function rather than form. As Allen and Widdowson (1979) state, the approach involves, "the learning of rules of use as well as rules of grammar" (p.141). Instructors are quite commonly directed to use the approach in curriculum and policy documents at both the national and local levels. Canadian examples of these documents include Citizenship and Immigration Canada's *Canadian Language Benchmarks* (1996), referred to above, and the Ontario Ministry of Education's *Continuing Education: A Resource Document* (1987). As described below, the instructors I studied also worked from a curriculum document which recommends the communicative approach.

An important implication of this approach has been to increase the responsibilities instructors have for curriculum development and implementation. For example, instructor-conducted needs assessments have become a hallmark of the way the 'communicative approach' has been applied in ESL programs in Canada, especially since the publication of Nunan's popular work (1988). This, of course, shows the deep influence of Tyler's (1949) model on SLE and ESL. Curriculum guidelines for ESL programs in Canada often explicitly describe needs assessments as the foundation upon which instructors write curricula (see Chapter 3). In effect, such curriculum guidelines (like the CLB) specify expected attainment levels for ESL learners. Instructors implementing such curricula are expected to plan, develop and provide the actual curriculum in practice so that students meet these proficiency levels (Cumming, 1995).

Recent Changes in ESL in Canada

Change as a key factor in adult ESL curricula has been well documented in the field's research on classroom practices (Cumming, 1993); teacher education (Richards & Nunan, 1990); assessment (Bachman, 1990) and evaluation (Alderson & Beretta, 1992). However, little research has been conducted on what preferences ESL instructors have in terms of curriculum responsibilities, despite seemingly countless guidelines that advise instructors on teaching methodology and curriculum development. As Chaudron (1988) put it, "theories and claims about language teaching methods., effective curriculum, or the importance of learner characteristics have rarely been based on actual research in language classrooms" (p. xv). More recently, in a review of related literature prefacing his study on curriculum planning and innovation, Cumming (1993) stated that "little information is available to understand how language teachers' knowledge and thinking guide their pedagogical actions" (p.31). As Cumming pointed out, most other aspects of education have seen research that either documents teachers' personal knowledge (Clandinin, 1986; Elbaz, 1983), describes instructional planning (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Leinhardt, 1988; Yinger, 1980) or consists of longitudinal studies of teacher practices (Cumming, 1988; Hunnsaker & Johnson, 1992; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Roemer, 1991). Scarcely any such inquiry has been conducted in respect to curriculum practices in ESL teaching.

In the 1990s, various major initiatives in ESL curriculum development have emerged, associated with national language training programs in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. These initiatives have formed important aspects of the national language and economic strategies of these countries related to immigrant settlement. Canadian immigration policy shifted with the 1991- 1995 Federal Immigration Plan. This plan explicitly referred to the economic benefits of increased immigration, arguing that the skills of immigrants were important resources and should be developed through more efficient and effective language training (Canada Employment and Immigration, 1994; Canada Employment and Immigration, 1991). Accordingly, the number of immigrants entering the country rose from below 200,000 to 250,000 yearly, refugee quotas were restricted in favor of immigrants with employable skills, government immigration procedures were streamlined, and immigrant language training was declared to be a national priority.

The federal government reallocated the $200 million it had previously distributed to a patchwork of language training programs throughout Canada to what soon became a single national language program: Language Instruction to Newcomers to Canada (LINC). Associated with this program were new curriculum guidelines, assessment instruments, and reporting schemes never before seen on such a national scale.

A major document reporting on the consultation process the federal government engaged in related to LINC referred to the need for national consistency and standards for all ESL programs in the country, whether or not they were funded by the federal government (Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, 1991). Accordingly, the National Working Group on Language Benchmarks was set up in 1992 to usher in these new standards. The group assembled various national ESL stakeholders, who engaged in a lengthy development process described by Pierce and Stewart (1997). At the time of conducting my thesis research, the new national benchmarks that this group commissioned was being introduced to programs across Canada. As mentioned above, the instructors under study were one of the first groups to adopt the assessment procedure associated with these benchmarks.

It is interesting to note the key part played by assessment in the new national ESL programs of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and England. As Brindley (1995) described it,

> figuring prominently amongst the key indicators used for system-level monitoring and reporting in many education and training contexts are statements of program outcomes which describe expectations of learner performance standards at different levels of achievement. (p.1).

These performance standards, as Brindley pointed out, have a number of advantages and disadvantages. National standards ensure that: learners focus on language as a tool for communication; assessment is closely linked to instruction; teachers are able to make informed judgements about students' needs; better communication between stakeholders can take place; and there is an objective basis for determining program needs. However, the potential problems associated with these standards are threefold. Citing A. Hargreaves (1989), Brindley noted that "when assessment takes the form of constant observation and monitoring in relation to standards, it can become a form of surveillance" (Brindley, 1995, p.8). A second problem that Brindley observed, citing Moore, (1997) is that individual and contextual differences are submerged in such national documents that treat different educational contexts and learner groups in a common manner. The third set of problems were associated with test reliability, validity and logistics.

Such devolutions of curriculum responsibilities to instructors are far from simple or clear cut. In these new national ESL programs, instructors are expected to have assessment skills that they might very well lack. They are also expected to make these assessments within a nationally mandated curriculum framework that they may not understand or feel is appropriate to their situation. In Canada, the national LINC program replaced a patchwork of relatively different ESL programs that had developed locally in different parts of the country. The previous experiences of ESL instructors were therefore quite disparate. Many relied on their own holistic judgements in terms of student assessment. Others simply worked in institutions with standardized testing procedures that they had little to do with. As shown by a wealth of consultation reports, articles and submissions (Baril, 1993; Canada Employment and Immigration, 1993; Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, 1993; Teachers of English as a Second Language-- Toronto, 1993), some instructors felt empowered because they now had a new responsibility in the area of assessment and felt supported by new curriculum documents they liked. Others felt that they had been deskilled because they now had to adhere to a national set of curriculum and assessment procedures that they had objections to.

Assessment was the first of the changes associated with the CLB to be felt at the site under study. Doubtless, more program changes will affect this site and others in the field as additional aspects of the CLB are implemented nationally. Policy changes will also affect ESL. Two such changes are already imminent at the time of writing: the restructuring of school boards in Ontario, which could have a major impact on the program under study here, and the devolution of LINC program sponsorship from the federal government to the provinces. My research examines a set of ESL instructors on the eve of these changes and within the broad contexts of the parameters of curriculum decision making I have described above.

Chapter 2. Methods

This chapter first provides a rationale for the case study approach I employed. I next describe the pilot conducted prior to the main study. A third section describes the selection of the case site, explaining how the group of instructors there resembled those working in adult ESL programs in Ontario generally. I next describe the collection of data, then the process of data management, the determination of coding categories and the final definitions of these categories. The chapter concludes with examples from the interview data to show how the coding categories were applied to these data.

Case Study Approach

A case study approach was chosen for this study because it provided the best basis to approach to this thesis' research question: How do these instructors assess the value of their own autonomy over curriculum decision making? No previous research or theories existed that would have offered a basis to design research on this topic in this specific context. So the approach I had to adopt was necessarily exploratory, descriptive and preliminary. Various quantitative approaches were considered, but rejected because of the difficulty in determining research categories and descriptions that would be valid and appropriate to the context I wished to study. As Chaudron (1988) emphasized,

> the methodological goal of the research is validity, or the extent to which the observational apparatus and inferences drawn from it will be meaningful, significant and applicable to further studies. Moreover, an essential element in the attainment of validity is reliability, one aspect of which includes the consistency with which others agree on the categories and descriptions and frequencies attributed to them. (p. 23)

There were three reasons why research categories were difficult to determine for this study. First, as indicated above, the nature of teacher professionalism in the present context of ESL instruction is not yet sufficiently understood for an adequate definition of 'teacher autonomy' to emerge. Second, there is little common agreement about the basic terms or concepts that constitute curriculum decision making in adult ESL, as is demonstrated below by the lengthy process of determining the coding categories for this study. Third, it is difficult to ascertain demographic facts about this kind of nonformal education. Canadian settlement ESL programs have not been 'mapped' in a manner that could demonstrate what a representative program might look like. For example, no information is currently available about how many ESL programs exist in Canada, nor how many instructors are employed. Recent surveys, such as the one conducted by Sanaoui (1997), are beginning this process.

There are some important strengths that a qualitative approach brings to the problem under study here. As Miles and Huberman (1994) pointed out, well collected qualitative data focuses on "naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that we have a strong handle on what 'real life' is like. That confidence is buttressed by local groundedness" (p. 10). Qualitative data is also marked by its "richness and holism, with strong potential for revealing complexity" (ibid.), and its suitability "for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes and structures of their lives" (ibid.). I chose a case study approach because I wanted to understand the situations and constraints that adult ESL instructors really experience in the context of their routine work. Having certain conceptions about issues of teacher autonomy through my own experiences as an ESL instructor and supervisor at the Toronto Board of Education, I wanted to look afresh at these matters in the context of a somewhat different, but related case and with instructors with whom I had had no previous acquaintance or relations.

I conducted a case study which concentrated on interview data. These data were supplemented with some classroom observations and an examination of a pertinent curriculum document. Given my lack of resources, I didn't attempt a full ethnographic study of the whole institutional context. However, I drew from ethnographic methodology when I emphasized description in my discussions of the site, instructors, classroom observations and curriculum documents. I also had ethnography in mind when I framed the interviews and emphasized the importance of the perceptions and interpretations of the study's participants.

The interviews were semi-structured, and are described at greater length below. Merriam (1990) recommended semi-structured interviews when "certain information is desired from all the respondents" (p. 74). I consulted Seidman (1991) about how to ask interview questions and Patton (1990) about how to ensure that the questions were open-ended.

The stance that I took during classroom observations was that of a 'participant as observer', where "the researcher remains primarily an observer, but has some interaction with study participants" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 40). Although I avoided actively participating while observing classroom activities, I answered questions put to me about my research. I often sat beside students during lessons and tried to express friendly interest in what they were doing and thinking. I took notes while conducting the observations that were purely descriptive, recording the procedures I witnessed and their timing.

Pilot Study

To prepare for the thesis research, I first conducted a pilot study with two instructors working for a program similar to the one I was to study in the main research. One of these instructors was a doctoral student in applied linguistics and the other was a masters student in education. Both had many years of experience teaching settlement ESL. I had two purposes in conducting this pilot. The first was to determine whether or not there were any misunderstandings as to concept and terminology that should be taken into account during the course of the main study. These directly related to the interview questions and coding categories. The second purpose in conducting the pilot had to do with my trying out an open-ended format while interviewing to see how I would do this and if modifications were needed.

As interviews were to be the principal data for analysis in this research, the pilot study was confined to this form of data collection. The pilot showed that I had to exercise extreme care in the interviews in order to ensure that I understood how participants and I used terminology. We often used terms such as 'communicative', 'linguistic', 'grammar', 'testing', and 'proficiency' differently. Asking for concrete examples proved to be the only certain way to determine what exactly the instructor was discussing. This difference in the use of terminology showed up in the main research. For example, different understandings appeared regarding the use of the term 'needs assessment'. By this, some of the instructors meant what is commonly described in current curriculum documents: an assessment of settlement needs that are usually arranged thematically in a communicative syllabus. However, some instructors used the term as being synonymous with an assessment of English language proficiency. At times, these instructors talked about 'needs assessment' as being conducted at the time a client entered the program for the purposes of placement. At other times, these same instructors used the term to describe how they assessed their learners for the purpose of promotion and graduation.

The open-ended format used for the interviews proved to be effective and was adopted for the main study. The pilot showed that it was important that I start each interview with the open-ended questions that appear in Appendices A and B. It was equally important, however, to follow these questions up with further prompts in order to clarify and expand on the responses. A conversational style for the interviews was important to establish since some of the information that the instructors imparted was confidential and I needed them to talk freely and sincerely about their circumstances for teaching. This open-ended rapport helped to establish this kind of rapport.

The pilot interview was also useful in determining the appropriateness of several options. Principally, I wanted to try out how I put the interview questions to the respondents. Attempting to ground the data in the natural contexts of the instructors' work, I rejected Patton's (1990) option of developing a conceptual framework prior to the collection of data. As an alternative, I adopted something akin to the 'provisional start list' that Glaser and Straus recommend (1970). Each respondent was given a list of questions and prompts to view during the interview. This list appears in Appendices A and B.

Selection of the Case Site

No basis was available on which I could select a case site that was truly representative of ESL instructors in Canada, but I considered it important that the instructors selected at least resemble the majority of adult ESL practitioners in Ontario. According to a recently completed survey of this population (Sanaoui, 1997), school board continuing education instructors, like the ones under study here, make up the largest category of ESL practitioners in Ontario. The instructors I chose to study were also typical in the sense that they work under contract and are paid close to the median wage.

In addition, the instructors at the site worked in conditions common in continuing education programs. There was a coordinator on site who was responsible for supervising and evaluating the teaching staff, conducting registration and intake, writing reports and maintaining statistics. The program had continuous enrolment and voluntary attendance. Clients often left and entered the program at any time during the term. There was also a minimum expectation for student enrolment. The instructors I studied also had training and experience that was close to the norm in these kinds of programs. All were female and had Bachelor degrees and TESL certificates. Of the five who participated in my study, two had Masters degrees, one directly related to SLE. Several had their Ontario teaching certificates. All but one had five or more years of adult ESL teaching experience. In referring to them later in the thesis, to the site, and all other institutions, I have used pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality.

In the program where they were employed, these instructors were expected to develop their own curricula based on the needs of their learners. They were also responsible for all learner assessment after a client was placed in their classes. Except in a few cases, when outside agencies like welfare or employment insurance requested them, the teaching staff at this site had few record keeping responsibilities apart from submitting monthly attendance reports to their coordinator. Professional development opportunities were voluntary, and the instructors received no additional payment for attending them. These seem to be fairly typical working conditions for adult ESL instructors in Ontario.

I selected the school board where I did the study because it was close enough to permit me ease of access, but sufficiently different from the situation where I usually worked that I could approach the circumstances with relatively little prior familiarity with its staff or curriculum. I made initial contacts with a board administrator, who referred me to a particular site which he considered amenable to the research I wanted to do. The site coordinator there arranged for me to meet the teaching staff, where I gave a full explanation of the study and asked for five volunteers, a number that seemed manageable given my resources. This number represented approximately half of the teaching staff at the site. The volunteers were provided with copies of the proposal for this thesis as had been approved by the thesis advisory committee, and which explicitly revealed that the focus for the study was teacher autonomy. Written letters of informed consent were distributed to all the participants and a letter granting administrative consent was obtained from the supervisory officers for the site. These letters appear as Appendices C and D.

Data Collection

I collected data principally through interviews with the instructors. Three additional procedures were used to gather information about the curriculum context: classroom observations, a personal profile survey of the instructors, and an examination of curriculum documents. The survey asked each instructor about their education and work backgrounds. They were instrumental in establishing rapport with the instructors at the beginning of each of the first interviews. A copy of this survey appears as Appendix E.

Because this study is essentially about the attitudes instructors hold, interviews were chosen as the principal source of data. Each instructor was interviewed twice, for approximately an hour at a time. I also conducted classroom observations to help frame these discussions, establish the context of the instructors' remarks and in the interests of verifying certain things they might have said in the interviews. Three classroom visits of an hour each were planned for each instructor. This was not logistically possible for two of them, who I only observed twice. However, these latter observations were slightly longer so that I spent an equal amount of time in each instructor's class. These observations occurred between the first and second set of interviews. The first set of interviews focused on establishing rapport and discussing the instructor's views on curriculum development in general. Using the classroom observations as a starting point, the second set of interviews looked at these curriculum issues in a concrete context before moving on to an explicit discussion about autonomy. The document analysis consisted of an examination of the principal curriculum guidelines that the instructors were expected to work from.

At the beginning of the interviews, I showed the instructors the questions and prompts found in Appendices A and B, which were taken directly from my thesis proposal. I then let each conversations take its course. I was not greatly concerned about the exact wording of the questions or prompts or the order in which they were asked. I made certain, however, that every discussion I had with the instructors covered the topics represented by the prompts. This ensured that each of instructor had an opportunity to comment on the various aspects of curriculum implementation that were later coded for analysis. In adopting this technique, I followed Merriam's (1990) recommendations:

> These [semi-structured] interviews are guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic. (ibid.)

The final aspect of data collection involved, in the interests of validating my interpretations, a member check with the instructors who were interviewed. After I had initially summarized the interview data (approximately 5 months after I collected it), the instructors were given copies of the following information that related to them personally: biographies, interview data summaries, the description of the site, and synopses of the classroom observations. I then consulted each instructor by phone and gave them an opportunity to change any of these sections. Every instructor made some minor changes to what I had initially produced, most in the interests of clarification. I made all the changes that the instructors asked for. While writing the final draft of this thesis, I took out approximately half of my original descriptions of the classroom observations that I gave to the instructors for the member check. This was done strictly in the interests of brevity and nothing pertaining to curriculum implementation decision making or essential to understanding the context was removed.

Data Management

I transcribed the interviews into 214 single-spaced pages. After much consideration, I chose turns in the interviews (ie. each speaker's verbal turn in the stretch of talk) as the unit of discourse segmentation for my analysis because I found that smaller discourse units were to be too difficult to define clearly or code reliably in the transcripts. All of the transcripts were segmented into each speaker's turns in the interview conversations. Explanations of how these coding categories were determined and examples from the data are found below.

The data were coded in two passes. In the first, I marked references made to selected curriculum topics. The data were multiple-coded, that is, I assigned many of the curriculum topics to each turn as seemed logically appropriate. Turns were marked whenever a reference to any of the categories of codes appeared. Most of the marked turns had references to only one or two codes. Few had more than four, although there were several that had references to seven. In this way, I reduced the qualitative data to quantifiable sets of categories to facilitate my analyses.

At the commencement of coding the data, I performed an inter-rater reliability check. A Ph.D. student at OISE and I each independently coded two interviews and correlated the results. This sample represented 20% of the total data. We agreed on 93.7% and 87.9% of the coding categories for the two interviews, for a combined average of 90.8%. On the basis of this result, the coding scheme was considered reliable, so I utilized it to code the remainder of the data.

Once the marked turns had been sorted from the rest of the data, I performed a second coding of the interview transcripts. This consisted of coding the turns marked in the first pass according to whether or not they contained opinions about who should make curriculum implementation decisions. Turns were marked with a '+', or positive, if the instructor indicated a desire for autonomy regarding the category in question. Turns were marked with a '—', or negative, if the instructor indicated a desire for someone else to make decisions regarding this category. This coding was thus my operational definition of preferences for instructor autonomy in curriculum decision making. The references to each code in each of the turns were then sorted and arranged as shown in Charts 2 and 3 in Chapter 4. There was a total of 262 references to these codes about autonomy across all of the marked turns about curriculum topics.

Determining Coding Categories

Determining the coding categories was a process that began by my consulting two seminal theoretical works. The first of these was Stern's (1992) language curriculum model, which contains specifications for four syllabi: language, culture, communicative activities and general language education. The second was Canale and Swain's (1979) language competency model, which defines language competency in four ways: linguistic, socio-cultural, strategic and discoursal.

I then compared these theoretical frameworks to three curriculum guidelines presently in use in this or similar settlement ESL programs in Ontario. The first of these was the Board of Education for the City of Toronto's *Adult ESL Curriculum Guidelines* (1994). The second was the *Green Book*, described below, a document that the instructors

I studied referred me to. I describe this guideline at length below. The third document was Citizenship and Immigration Canada's *Ontario LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (1997).

The Citizenship and Immigration document adopted Canale and Swain's (1979) model as a basis for its categorization of language curriculum content with one modification: it combined the linguistic and discoursal competencies, stating that field testing had shown that this was the preference among ESL practitioners. Accordingly, I grouped any discourse elements I came across in the data with linguistic.

The Toronto School Board document divided the curriculum planning process into 9 steps: conduct needs assessment, establish learner goals, select themes and topics, select language functions, choose teaching materials, design activities, identify structural items, provide socio-cultural information, and evaluate learners and the curriculum. Noting logical similarities among these steps, I further refined them to make them useful as coding categories suitable for my research purposes. I combined 'establishing learner goals' with 'conducting needs assessment' because both relied primarily on consulting learners; 'providing socio-cultural information' with 'selecting the themes and topics' because the content of the first matched closely in ESL teaching practices with that of the second; and 'selecting language functions' with 'identifying structural items' so they could be subsumed into a general category pertaining to language topics. I separated the step 'describing evaluation of learners and curriculum' into two categories, one related to the assessment of learner proficiency and the other to program evaluation in general.

As a result of this process, I determined 8 coding categories: linguistic elements, themes, materials, activities, strategic competency, evaluation of learner proficiency, program evaluation, and needs assessment. This list was again modified after the pilot study because the two instructors I interviewed discussed strategic elements in terms of needs assessment, so I decided to combine these two categories. This reduced the number of categories to 7. I added 3 other categories as a result of the pilot. They appeared to me to bear importantly on issues of instructor autonomy in view of the curriculum context, even though they did not strictly pertain to steps in the developing curriculum: references to curriculum guidelines, relations to other staff members, and professional development. These new categories were added because some of the more interesting remarks made by the two instructors in the pilot relevant to issues of curriculum development were not captured in the original 7. This increased the number of coding categories to 10.

One final modification to the coding scheme occurred during the initial analysis of the data. Only one instructor talked about autonomy in reference to program evaluation. Upon closer examination, the remarks she made regarding this category were in reference to other staff members. The coding scheme was adjusted accordingly, eliminating the category of program evaluation because it was not something most of the instructors routinely did or described as part of their curriculum practices. This gave me a net toal of 9 coding categories.

Definitions of Coding Categories

The 9 coding categories that were determined in the manner described above and used in my analysis were: Activities (A); Curriculum Guidelines (G); Linguistic Elements (L); Materials (M); Needs Assessment (N); Assessment of Learner Proficiency (P); Professional Development (PD); Relations with Other Staff (R); and Settlement Theme Content (T).

'Activities' (A) refers to all of the ways in which the instructors said they organized and presented language learning opportunities in the classroom. They are what Tyler (1949) called 'learning experiences'. I used the term 'activities' broadly to include both communicative and non-communicative orientations to classroom tasks or other organized classroom experiences. The former form what Stern (1992) called 'the communicative activities syllabus', including group and pair work, jigsaw activities and community contact assignments where 'real' communication occurs. In my analysis, however, I have also used 'activities' to encompass such things as lecturing, question/ response, or instructor-led choral or individual oral repetition, which may be more characteristic of other approaches to language education.

'Curriculum Guidelines' (G) refers to any document meant to provide guidance on curriculum content. In almost all cases, this is in reference to the two principal curriculum documents associated with this site, known collectively as the *Green Book* and discussed in more detail below. Guidelines differ from actual curricula in the sense that they are syllabus frameworks only, and thus require instructors to do a large amount of decision making to put into teaching practice. The *Green Book* describes itself to its users in this way:

> You may have entered this teaching assignment assuming that the curriculum would already be defined for you. But, you will soon discover that this is only partially true. Appendix A provides you with an overview of the material appropriate for each of the four levels of instruction. But this is only a guideline -- you will need to make many decision along the way to adapt these guidelines to the unique needs and capabilities of your class. (p. 19)

'Linguistic Elements' (L) refers to instructional content that describes language explicitly. This is not simply 'grammar'. It includes the three 'language syllabi' within the content options that Stern identified (1992): 'pronunciation', 'grammar', and 'functional analysis'; as well as the two of the four competencies in Canale and Swain's (1979) model: 'linguistic' and discourse'.

'Materials' (M) refers to instructional supports or materials used to enhance learning opportunities. Stern (1992) referred to these as 'resources' and listed a wide variety of examples, such as course texts, video or audio tapes, photocopied handouts, board games, dictionaries, readers, multi-media kits, and authentic documents.

'Needs Assessment' (N) refers to either initial or on-going identification and evaluation of the settlement needs of learners. I used this term broadly, in the same manner that Stern (1992) did when he, citing Trim (1980), advocated using needs assessment to look at the entire societal and individual contexts. In curriculum documents pertaining to the instructors in this study, these are commonly categorized thematically under such headings as 'housing' or 'transportation'. In addition, in my analyses, I marked turns as being in the category of 'needs assessment' in which discussions of learner affective variables occurred, such as learning style. However, this category did not include references to a learner's English language proficiency (which were grouped with the following category).

'Assessment of Learner Proficiency' (P) refers to the evaluation or testing of a learner's English language skills, abilities or achievement, usually in reference to the ESL program's predetermined levels of proficiency. Such assessments are commonly done at the time a learner enters the program for the purpose of placement or when decisions are being made regarding promotion or graduation. Stern (1992) used the term 'evaluation of student progress' when discussing topics related to this category.

'Professional Development' (PD) refers to any career improvement activities or training, such as courses, professional reading, workshops or conferences. Opinions coded in this category included references to second language acquisition or general education that was not strictly related to teacher training.

'Relations to Other Staff' (R) refers to discussions about or with other staff members and colleagues. This includes references to supervisory, support or professional development staff. This category, developed after the pilot study was conducted, tried to capture opinions related to the 'culture' of the workplace. As A. Hargreaves (1994) pointed out, "teacher cultures, the relationships between teachers and their colleagues, are among the most educationally significant aspects of teachers' lives and work" (p.165).

'Settlement Theme Content' (T) refers to content. They include elements pertaining to the socio-cultural competency outlined by Canale and Swain (1979) and the cultural syllabus developed by Stern (1992) but which is not strictly linguistic. This included themes such as 'housing', 'banking', 'shopping', 'the telephone' or 'transportation', relevant to ESL learners' settlement in Ontario.

Examples of Coded Turns

In this section, ten examples from the data are provided in order to concretely illustrate how I coded the data in both the first and second passes. As was the case with the data as a whole, most of the examples are 'positive' in their views about teacher autonomy, and were coded with multiple categories. These examples are taken directly from the interview transcripts.

In the first example below, the turn was marked in the first pass as referring to 'linguistic elements' (L) and 'curriculum guidelines' (G). In the second pass, the turn was marked 'positive':

> So, the guidelines are there and they're great, if you're stuck not knowing what they need or what's to be taught, but I wouldn't teach anything they don't need. Just because the book says, ok, teach the conditional; if they have it, why teach it?

In the second example below, the turn was coded as referring to 'curriculum guidelines'(G), 'needs assessment' (N) and 'assessment of proficiency'(P). In the second pass, the turn was marked as 'negative':

> If the class was set, this is what's going to be taught, then yes, any teacher will know what she's going to cover. And then assess students to see whether they fit or don't fit in their class. But, it's not like that. The class isn't set, the class, the teaching topics are open, open for suggestion, open to change, and can stem or come from any category, any level. So, you have to, I don't think a teacher can, should assess beginning students. Someone who's more trained at that, who understands the guidelines and the benchmarks or whatever, that would be the best thing and then the teacher would take that group, ok, and then work with them.

In the third example below, the turn was marked in the first pass with a single code: 'needs assessment' (N). In the second pass it was marked as 'positive'. The instructor said, "Well, personally, I would like to find out about the needs myself. Because I think I know my students better than anybody else".

In the fourth example below, the turn was originally marked as 'evaluation' (E), before I grouped that category into 'relations with other staff' (R). In the second pass it was marked 'positive':

> So, well, having it go over my head and being reviewed by someone else, I don't know what purpose that would serve. I really feel personally responsible, very responsible and treat my students very seriously and I'm the one that these evaluations matter the most to.

In the fifth example below, the turn was marked 'curriculum guidelines' (G), 'assessment of learner proficiency' (P) and 'relations with other staff' (R). In the second pass it was marked 'positive':

> She [the program coordinator] leaves it up to the teachers to talk about. We have a transfer sheet that we use saying I'm transferring this student on. And there is a student who I assessed, ummm... whenever, the beginning of this term, who I assessed at a level... I was questioning whether she was a level 3 or a level 4 and I put her into level 4 and she's come back to my class. She was finding the level four a little difficult, and the level four teacher said that she's struggling, can she come back to you? We're very flexible with that. I think you have to be.

In the sixth example below, the turn was marked 'theme'(T), 'curriculum guidelines' (G) and 'needs assessment'(N). In the second pass, it was marked 'negative':

> There is a need in my class to do something on health or to go to the doctor or something like that, I would really like to have some guidelines somewhere, in the curriculum, where I can see how to go about it.... maybe I can do the same thing in a better way.

In the seventh example below, the turn was marked 'professional development' (PD). In the second pass it was marked 'positive':

> I haven't met an undedicated teacher here. We're all really dedicated to our profession and learning. We're really, really concerned about the well-being of the students and doing our best. And the fact that we want a lot of control over our autonomy and what we do in the classrooms, it's not that we don't want to be... it's because we want to deliver the best quality program that there can be.

In the eighth example below, the turn was marked 'activities' (A). In the second pass it was marked 'positive':

> I really am of two minds on that. On the one hand, I really enjoy being in control over what I do in the classroom. I'm really the closest to the students and I know them the best... On the other hand, it's time consuming and tiring.

In the ninth example below, the turn was marked 'materials' (M). In the second pass it was marked 'positive'. The turn was a short response to the question, "What kind of control do you want to have over the choice of materials?" The instructor replied that, "I would want to have total control":

In the tenth and final example below, the turn was marked 'curriculum guidelines' (G), 'linguistic elements' (L), 'needs assessment'(N), 'assessment of learner proficiency' (P) and 'themes'(T). In the second pass, it was marked 'positive':

> Social communication, you can divide that into so many topics that you would think that that is what they would only need. But I have students in level 4 who have been here three months and students who could have been here three years. So, they have different capabilities, don't they? Ok, and they have learned with different methods, different styles of learning and they've learned different things. So, you, like I said, guidelines are ok, but if that student doesn't need it, don't teach it, you know.
> but if that student does, then bring it in.

Chapter 3. Context

The Rosewood Adult Center is part of the Continuing Education Department for Erie County Board of Education, in southwestern Ontario. The Board serves a mixture of urban and rural communities over a wide area. The immigrant population is large and well established. New immigration has increased in recent years and is concentrated in the County's urban centers. Rosewood is in one of these urban areas and has the advantage of being part of a major community center across the street from a large shopping mall.

Rosewood is one of the largest adult sites managed by the Board. The range of courses here include ESL, Literacy, English for Work, Numeracy, Computeracy, and Academic Upgrading. They are offered both day and evening. The ESL courses at this site include those for Literacy, Reading and Writing, Speaking English Confidently, Pronunciation, ESL Computeracy, Citizenship, and separate classes for ESL levels 1 through 4. Level 1 refers to a beginning level of English proficiency. Level 4 refers to an advanced.

At Rosewood, one coordinator manages these ESL classes with the assistance of a clerical worker. She supervises approximately ten instructors, half of whom teach from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday to Friday. The remainder teach in the evenings. All of the teaching staff work on a contract basis. The instructors were not unionized at the time the interview data was collected. The classrooms are physically pleasant and relatively spacious.

The ESL courses at Rosewood are offered four times per year in terms that last from two and one half to three months. The only extended break in instruction occurs in

August. Classes do not open at the beginning of a term if enrollment is not high enough to justify it and are closed if enrolment drops substantially.

Continuous enrolment is an important aspect of the ESL program at Rosewood. Clients know that they can join the classes at any time. This is not the case with the computeracy class because the elements of the non-linguistic content has to be built upon one another.

Attendance is voluntary for the vast majority of the clientele. However, a substantial number of learners are under pressure from agencies such as welfare, workers' compensation and employment insurance to attend regularly. These agencies request and receive attendance reports about these learners from the site coordinator. All learners must pay tuition fees, either themselves or through the agency which is financially assisting them. In the case of Canadian citizens, landed immigrants and convention refugees, this fee is nominal. Visitors and refugee claimants without immigration status can attend, but must pay a substantially greater fee. Learners taking the computeracy course also pay a small lab fee.

I observed in the classes that I visited a great heterogeneity to the backgrounds of the learners at this site. Although the largest groups come from Eastern Europe and South Asia, no single first language group makes up more than a quarter of the clientele. In addition to the ones noted above, there are learners in these classes who have Asian, Latin-American and African backgrounds. Approximately two-thirds of the learners are women. According to the instructors, the economic and educational backgrounds of these learners are also quite varied.

Instructors

Table 1, on the following page, provides biographical profiles of the five instructors who participated in my study. When I observed them interacting with each other, their morale seemed good. There was a lot of socializing in the staff room during breaks and I noticed that the instructors shared materials and offered each other advice. All of the instructors seemed to like and respect each other. The supervisor had good rapport with her staff. She regularly consulted the instructors during breaks and seemed to have their respect and trust. The supervisor was full of praise for the instructors in the program. In all, it was a great pleasure to be in the company of these dedicated people.

Apostrophe

Apostrophe has taught adult ESL since 1987. At the time of my study, she was teaching two separate classes at this site: Level 3 and Citizenship. Apostrophe's teaching experience has been in all four of the ESL levels offered by the Board, and she has worked at a great variety of sites throughout Erie County. Except for a brief period close to the beginning of her career, Apostrophe has taught for the same employer.

Prior to taking up teaching, Apostrophe trained travel counselors. This followed naturally from her BA and MA in Canadian History and Geography. She left the workforce to raise a family and became interested in adult ESL through a friend, who introduced her to a night school principal for the Erie Board's Continuing Education Department. In addition to the immense satisfaction she received from being in the classroom, Apostrophe enjoyed the flexibility that came with this new career. She had the ability to take on more

Table 1: Summary of Instructor Profiles

	Apostrophe	*Hamnet*	*Ingrid*	*Janet*	*Kwacha*
Settlement ESL Experience	*10 years*	*1 year*	*5 years*	*7 years*	*6 years*
Level Teaching During Study	*Level 3*	*Computeracy*	*Level 4*	*Level 4*	*Literacy*
Other Teaching Experiences	*Training Travel Counselors*	*Practicum With B.Ed.*	*University Level ESL/ EFL*	*Arts and Crafts*	*Credit EFL High School*
Non-Teaching Experience	*Parenting*	*SLE Research*	*SLE Research/ Parenting*	*Customer Rep/ Parenting*	*Parenting*
TESL Certificate	*through Board of Education*	*Minor as part Of BA*	*MA in TESOL*	*through Board of Education*	*ESL Part 1*
University Degrees	*BA and MA In Cdn. History*	*BA in English B.Ed.*	*BA in English MA in TESOL*	*BA in French Post-Grad Linguistics*	*B.A in English B.Ed.*
First Language	*English*	*Spanish English*	*Polish*	*English*	*English*
Second or Other Languages	*Some French*	*Some Tagalog*	*English Some Russian*	*French Some Ukrainian Some Italian Some Latin*	*Punjabi, Urdu Hindi, Gujarati Swahili*

work as her family responsibilities lessened. Shortly after starting her new career, Apostrophe took a part-time TESL course offered by the school board and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship. Since that time, Apostrophe has taken advantage of many professional development opportunities offered by the Board and the provincial TESL Association. At the request of her supervisor, she conducted a training session for her colleagues on teaching grammar communicatively.

Apostrophe is a native speaker of English. She has some elementary understanding of French which she was able to practice while travelling through Europe. Apostrophe took on an administrative position for a brief period but found that she much preferred working in the classroom.

Hamnet

Hamnet has had extensive training but little experience at this point in her career. In addition to two evening classes, she teaches the daytime 'computeracy' course at this site, which is designed to give learners their first opportunity at developing computer skills in the context of learning English. I interviewed her about her computeracy class. She starting working for the Board just a few months prior to this study. Her ESL teaching career started about a year before that when she worked for a large private school in downtown Toronto which specializes in training visa-students.

Hamnet is a recent graduate from a well-known American university. She has a BA in English and Secondary Education with a minor in TESOL. As part of completing her degree she took a practicum teaching position in a regular high school. She also worked as a research assistant to two professors in her university's Linguistics and SLE departments and helped develop an ESL software program.

Although perfectly fluent in English, Hamnet's first language is Spanish. She moved at an early age to an English speaking environment. She also speaks French and has learnt some Tagalog. English is the language spoken in her home.

Ingrid

Ingrid has taught adult ESL in the settlement context since 1992. She also tutored in the university context extensively prior to this. Except for a brief period as a teacher in a neighboring school district, she has had only one employer in settlement ESL, the Erie County Board of Education. Ingrid worked at variety of sites in the district before coming to this one a year ago.

Ingrid has an MA in TESOL from a university in Eastern Europe and took post-graduate studies at an American university prior to her immigration to Canada. Although she still has an avid interest in theory and research, Ingrid feels more fulfilled in the classroom. She enjoys the rewards of interacting closely with adult learners on a daily basis.

Ingrid's first language is Polish and it remains the language of her home. Ingrid also does some private translation work.

Ingrid has not worked extensively on curriculum projects besides the ones strictly pertaining to her own class. However, at the time of this study, she was beginning work on a program evaluation project for this site with another colleague, Janet.

Janet

Janet has been teaching adult ESL since 1990, always for the same employer. She teaches two classes at Rosewood: Level 3 and Pronunciation. These two classes provide her with a full time position. She worked at a number of sites in the district before coming to this one when it opened.

Janet has a BA in French Language and Literature. She has also taken some post-graduate courses in phonetics, linguistics and psychology. Just after graduation, Janet began work as a French language customer representative for a national hardware company. She also had part-time positions as an arts and craft instructor and in human resources. Janet left the workforce shortly after the birth of her second child.

She entered the ESL profession when she answered a newspaper advertisement and went through a formal hiring process. She immediately enjoyed it and continued to develop the skills she learned while instructing arts and crafts. The profession gave her the flexibility that she needed and the opportunity to gradually move to full time work as her family responsibilities lessened.

Janet obtained her TESL certificate through a course offered jointly by the school district and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship soon after finding employment with the Board. Since that time she has attended a wide variety of professional development workshops and conferences.

She had worked on the development of a pronunciation syllabus in collaboration with a number of her colleagues. In addition, as mentioned above, Janet was just starting to work on a program evaluation project for this site with another of her colleagues, Ingrid.

Janet is a native English speaker. Her parents were born and raised in the Ukraine but spoke English in the home after emigrating to Canada. Janet has good command of her heritage language and has extensively studied French, Italian and Latin.

Kwacha

Kwacha has taught settlement ESL to adults since 1991. This has been for the same employer. She teaches the literacy class at Rosewood, which is a half-time position. Kwacha has taught at a fair number of other sites for the Board before being transferred to Rosewood when the program began two years ago.

The class that Kwacha teaches was funded under LINC the year previous to this study, but returned to the regular ESL program at the beginning of the term.

Kwacha obtained her Bachelor of Education from a university in India. She had extensive high school credit teaching experience throughout Eastern Africa before emigrating to Canada from her native Kenya in 1989.

Not long after coming to Canada, she taught a weekend Punjabi heritage language course for the Board on the weekends but disliked the experience. She was distressed by the children's lack of discipline and decided to seek a position in adult education.

Professional development is important for Kwacha, but she feels that family and financial pressure have prevented her from taking advantage of the opportunities which present themselves. Kwacha has worked on curriculum development projects for heritage language programs both in Canada and Africa.

English is her native language, but through her family and work she has become fluent in Punjabi, Hindi, Swahili, Gujarati and Urdu.

Curriculum Guidelines

Two curriculum documents offer a framework for adult ESL instructors who work for the Erie Board of Education (to preserve confidentiality in this study and my principle of using pseudonyms for all local names, I have omitted all bibliographical references to these documents). The two documents form a pair, with each referring to the other as an additional resource. Together, they form a very comprehensive guideline. Owing to the common color of their covers, the staff at Rosewood refer to these two documents collectively as the *Green Book*. Both documents were approximately ten years old at the time of my research. The first of them is an 85 page, soft-bound text titled *Teaching Language Structures*. It segments English grammatical structures into four levels and makes suggestions as to how they can be treated in the classroom. The second, approximately twice the length of the first, is called *The Instructor's Handbook*. This contains a synopsis of the Board's educational philosophy and the teaching methodology it recommends for use. All of the instructors have copies of these documents and are encouraged by their supervisors to use them.

Appendix F reproduces the table of contents for *The Instructor's Handbook*. The model of curriculum it advocates evidently derives from Tyler's (1949), particularly in its key categories. Some obvious examples of Tyler's influence is seen in some of the section headings within the chapters in *The Instructor's Handbook*: Diagnosing Learner Needs and Interests (within Chapter 3); Selecting Appropriate Lesson Activities (within Chapter 4); Managing Pace, Timing and Transitions (within Chapter 5); and Evaluating

Learner and Lesson Effectiveness (within Chapter 5). These examples correspond with the four tasks that Tyler outlined in the quotation from his work above in Chapter 1.

Although *Teaching Language Structures* provides concrete advice and examples about how to treat the grammatical elements it outlines, there is little offered in the way of defining them. The document assumes that instructors know them. Two examples will serve to illustrate this.

In covering the future tense, *Teaching Language Structures* breaks the grammar point into two components: the future tense with 'will' and the future tense with 'going to'. In the section pertaining to 'going to', the document first provides an example of a teacher-led whole class activity in which the instructor asks questions such as, "When am I going home?" To this, the class replies, "You're going home at four-thirty". The instructor then asks individual learners in turn questions of a similar nature in front of the entire class. The learners are then paired up and to ask each other the questions thus modeled. The document then advises that other linguistic elements be introduced. Examples of these include expressions such as 'make dinner' or 'go to bed'; new pronoun subjects; and yes/ no questions.

The document then provides a second example of how this point can be covered. This whole-class activity is described as an 'action chain'. One of the learners gives the instructor commands such as, "get up". Before the instructor performs the action, she describes what she is about to do to by saying, "I'm going to get up." The instructor then gives commands of a similar nature to individual learners who use the target grammar point to the same effect. This activity proceeds as a 'chain' around the class until everyone has had a chance to give commands, act them out, and describe the activity.

In appendices to the document, a number of additional teaching resources have been added. These include a verb chart, some suggestions on how to demonstrate contrasts between different verb tenses and a set of short stories and descriptions that can be used to further illustrate a selected number of grammar points.

The Instructor's Handbook combines a number of elements. It is at once an introduction to an endorsed teaching methodology and a set of recommendations as to course content. It starts off with a clear endorsement of the communicative method, citing the Ontario Ministry of Education's resource document *Developing English as a Second Language Non-Credit Courses for Adults* (1989). This document defines the communicative method as:

> An approach that aims to a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. (Ontario Ministry of Education, as cited in *The Instructor's Handbook*, p.ix)

The Ministry document, quoted at length, recommends interactive activities and authentic language use within a socio-cultural context. It also stresses the importance of developing practical lessons which can be put to immediate use outside of the classroom.

The *Instructor's Handbook* then makes the case that adult methodology should be different from that employed for children. Adults have different purposes in seeking formal education and react differently to it. *The Instructor's Handbook* recommends conducting needs assessments, creating an informal atmosphere, and designing learner-centered activities such as pair and group work. It also emphasizes that learners will gain a sense of empowerment in a successful language classroom.

After these two first chapters which set a philosophical framework, the document gives general recommendations about curriculum planning. *The Instructor's Handbook* makes it clear that instructors are expected to develop a "multi-track" curriculum in which five elements are combined: 'Life Application Situations or Themes'; 'Communicative Functions'; 'Language Structures'; 'Vocabulary' and 'Pronunciation'. 'Life Application Themes' are items such as 'Time', Clothing', Feelings' and Transportation'. 'Communication Functions' are items such as 'Showing Regret', Social Communication' and 'Exchanging Items'. 'Language Structures' are the grammatical elements taken directly from *Teaching Language Structures*. In one of the appendices to the *Instructor's Handbook,* the first three of these elements are listed per proficiency level. Some of the items in each of these lists occur across all of the levels. Others are unique to one. 'Vocabulary' and 'Pronunciation' are not organized by proficiency level. However, there is a subsequent chapter devoted to each of these five elements and the decisions an instructor is expected to make regarding them.

These decisions are not simply a matter of covering the grammatical content found in *Teaching Language Structures*. In the *Instructor's Handbook*'s discussion of curriculum planning, it is emphasized to the instructors that the content of the *Green Book*, "is only a guideline-- you will need to make many decisions along the way to adapt this guideline to the unique needs and capabilities of your class". The center-piece for this process of decision-making is the needs assessment. Although the document is not specific about how an instructor should determine these needs, it repeats the necessity of doing so for all five of the above elements.

In addition to the recommendations made to instructors in terms of curriculum content, *The Instructor's Handbook* also makes suggestions related to lesson planning and classroom management. These recommendations mainly have to do with activity planning and are once again to be linked to the needs of the learners at hand. Instructors are advised to plan activities that develop authentic communication and take into account various learning styles. These chapters also touch briefly on program evaluation and assessment of learner progress. These discussions, however, are not particularly concrete.

In all, these two curriculum documents provide a clear framework and a great deal of latitude for instructor decision-making. This latitude is, of course, contained within the endorsement of the communicative approach found at the beginning of *The Instructor's Handbook*.

Classroom Observations

My classroom observations were conducted in an effort to understand the context in which these instructors worked and to help me frame and specify the second of the two interviews which I held with each person. All of the observations were completed, with one exception, over the course of two weeks. At the beginning of the first class visit with each instructor, I was introduced to the learners. I described my research purpose, then asked the learners if anyone had any objections to my presence. No one raised objections. On the contrary, several times during the course of the observations, learners asked me questions to further understand the nature of the research and to offer opinions of their own. Given my limited resources, these opinions could not be used to inform this study. Often, in the course of these brief discussions, the learners complemented the instructors and the program. For the most part, however, I sat to the side of the class and took notes, endeavoring to stay out of the lesson procedures. At the end of the final visit to each class, I complemented the instructor and thanked the learners for their cooperation. What follows are brief synopses of what I observed in each class, with special attention paid to events pertaining to curriculum decision making.

Apostrophe

Apostrophe's class consisted of eighteen students on average, the majority of whom were women in their mid to late 20s. Most were from Eastern Europe, but there were sizable numbers of learners from East and South Asia. This was a friendly group, with a lot of humor and easy rapport among them. Apostrophe had them seated at tables in a large semi-circle facing each other and the blackboard. During the course of the three visits to this class, its composition didn't seem to change remarkably.

First Classroom Observation. In the first activity observed, Apostrophe led the entire class orally through a cloze exercise (where learners fill in blank spaces in a text or loose-leaf sheet with missing vocabulary or structural items) from a handout that concentrated on question formation and contractions in the present perfect verb tense. Apostrophe then went to the blackboard and picked out some examples of learner's errors and expanded on them to demonstrate correct alternatives. The next activity was based on a reading passage from *McLean's* magazine that the class had been dealing with in depth the previous week. Apostrophe asked the whole class questions regarding the content of the article and put key words from the answers she was given on the blackboard. She asked her learners to make up new questions based on these models. Aprostrophe then divided the class into groups of three. Each learner was asked to consult with their partners and write a piece of ten to twelve sentences summarizing the incident described in the magazine article and using the present perfect verb tense.

Second Classroom Observation. The second class visit began as groups of learners were picking up the previous day's writing assignment from where they left it. Apostrophe had the members in each group exchange papers so that peer correction of grammar could take place while she went around the class, giving encouragement and feedback. During this activity, several students asked questions about passive voice constructions found in the original magazine article. Apostrophe told her learners that the passive voice was not part of the level 3 curriculum as described in the *Green Book*. However, she told the class that she would explain this to them anyway and went to the blackboard in order to do this. She wrote the examples of the passive voice from the article and went into detail about its structure and purpose. After fifteen minutes, Apostrophe returned to answering individual questions about vocabulary from the article.

Third Classroom Observation. At the time of the third visit, the class had moved on from the magazine article to cover time clauses in the future tense as her grammatical focus. Apostrophe first dealt with the grammar explicitly, going over the rules and citing numerous examples. She spent a fair amount of time on this, answering questions and going into great detail. The learners were then asked to write five sentences of their own using the targeted structure. Apostrophe went around the class, encouraging and correcting. This session wrapped up with the distribution of a small crossword puzzle about the month of January taken from a local newspaper

Hamnet

At the time of the observations, Hamnet's class consisted of approximately ten learners, all in their late 20s or early 30s. All but one were women. Half came from South Asia, half from Eastern Europe. All were seated seminar-style during the English component of the class and at their own computers during the computeracy portion. The computers in the classroom were up to date models.

First Classroom Observation. This observation took place in the English component of the class. Hamnet started with a general review of the grammar rules pertaining to possession, concentrating on the spelling of plurals. She used a number of concrete examples and extended the explanation to include a review of possessive pronouns . Hamnet then turned to a description of a family tree and asked one of the learners to talk about her own. Hamnet recorded this tree on a whiteboard and led the class in practicing possessives in relation to it. The instructor pointed out a few pronunciation difficulties and assigned a cloze exercise focusing on possessives as homework.

Second Classroom Observation. This observation took place during the computer portion of the lesson. Hamnet demonstrated the different accessories found in Windows 3.1, such as 'Paintbrush', 'Notepad' and 'Calendar'. The learners then went to their individual computers to complete a writing assignment on a selected topic. The learners then exchanged letters and responded to the ones they had been given. Hamnet closed the lesson by asking each of the learners to use the 'Calendar' accessory in Windows 3.1 to plan their schedules for the next day.

Third Classroom Observation. I observed a lesson concentrating on oral skills during my third visit. Hamnet first asked her students to classify themselves as 'optimists' or 'pessimists'. She then distributed a set of roles for each learner to act out. Some were cast as 'optimists' and others were cast as 'pessimists'. All were given serious personal problems as part of their roles and told to seek advice from their classmates. She divided the class into groups of three in which one learner sought advice from a second. The third member of each group recorded the exchange between the other two and then reported on it to the whole class when the group activity ended.

Ingrid

On average, Ingrid's class consisted of fifteen learners, all but two of whom were women. Most were in their late 20s or early 30s and came from Eastern Europe and Asia. They were seated at tables in a semi-circle facing the instructor and a large white board. Although the composition of the class didn't vary over the sessions that I observed, the overall number did. On the second day, for example, three of the learners from the previous session failed to turn up. In later discussions with all of the instructors at Rosewood, it became clear that this was a common occurrence.

First Classroom Observation. Ingrid started her day's lesson by outlining the session's objectives to her learners. She then collected the homework that she had given at the end of the previous day, and then turned to a review of the material covered on the previous day, a *Reader's Digest* article about fraud. Ingrid followed this up by writing five words on the whiteboard from the article. The learners were asked to look up the definitions of these words and compose sentences using them. Ingrid went around the class giving encouragement and feedback while this went on, sometimes interrupted the class to point out common errors.

Second Classroom Observation. At the start of the second visit, Ingrid reviewed the vocabulary from the previous day's material. She asked the whole class for synonyms for some of the more difficult of these words and placed them on the whiteboard. She extended this further providing words that were similar or opposite to her original selections. After this brief activity, Ingrid introduced the day's objectives: the use of 'wish' and letters of complaint in formal business format. This started with a cloze exercise focused on 'wish'. Ingrid then reviewed the grammar point explicitly on the whiteboard in both the past and present forms. She asked individual learners questions to test their understanding of these rules before moving on to the next activity. Ingrid asked the learners to think about their own lives in terms of their past regrets and present desires and to form two sentences describing them. Every learner was then given a slip of paper describing a situation. Each of the learners went around to as many classmates as possible, describing this situation. In turn, the learners she approached responded to the description using 'wish' in the present and past forms.

Third Classroom Observation. At the start of the third visit to the class, Ingrid went over the errors from the student work that she collected as homework. Using the whiteboard extensively, she went over the grammar rules for some of the more common errors that she found. Ingrid then launched into a listening exercise by playing a CBC radio exerpt about a new consumer product and asked the learners to take note of any vocabulary that they couldn't understand. Once the tape finished, Ingrid put the words that the learners came up with on the whiteboard and went over their definitions. She then grouped the class into threes and handed out copies of articles on new consumer inventions. Each group had a different article to read and discuss. Once enough time had elapsed for this, the groups were split up into three new groups. One member from each one of the first set of groups ended up in one of the second set of groups. The learners then talked about the inventions they had read about in their first group from memory.

Janet

Janet had eighteen learners in her class on average, with roughly an even number of men and women. There was no predominant racial or first language group in this class. The largest portion of learners were in their late 20s and early 30s. There was a lot of interaction in this class. Janet enjoyed a close and easy rapport with her learners.

First Classroom Observation. Janet started with a handout containing examples of sentences with transitive and intransitive verbs. She asked each learner in turn to identify parts of speech in the examples orally in front of the entire class. Janet moved to a second handout which introduced new material to the class: predicate nominatives and predicate adjectives. Janet then went over the examples found on the handout in detail, varying them in order to illustrate how the grammatical structure worked. The class slowly worked through this handout as a whole, with Janet taking great care in explaining the rules of use and augmenting the examples on the handout with her own. Janet then turned to the homework she had assigned the previous day on linking verbs. In turn, the learners were asked to write the sentences they had come up with for homework on the blackboard.

Second Classroom Observation. The second classroom visit occurred three days after the first and focused on overcoming communication problems in restaurants. Janet started by dividing the class into pairs and asking them to work on a set of cloze exercises based on dialogues between customers and wait staff. Janet then asked each pair of students to practice the dialogues in preparation for acting them out in front of the rest of the class. When each of the groups was ready, Janet had each come in front of the class and to act out the dialogues.

Kwacha

Kwacha's class had fourteen learners in her class on average. There was no predominant race or first language and the sexes were evenly divided. Half of the learners were in their 40s or 50s. A few were in their 60s. In my experience, literacy classes like Kwacha's tend to have older students than classes of other proficiency levels. There was a very warm atmosphere to the class, and the learners seemed to like each other and their instructor immensely. At the end of the day that I attended, everyone seemed reluctant to leave and took an extra effort to wish their classmates goodbye.

First Classroom Observation. Kwacha started her lesson by dividing the class into three groups. Each group was then given a set of cards with pictures and words related to several topics dealing with time. Kwacha then took the cards from each group and brought the class back together. She then held up each card in turn and asked the class questions related to them . Kwacha's next activity was a jazz chant. She handed out copies of the chant and played the audiotape. Kwacha stopped the tape periodically, repeating the words and writing the vocabulary on the blackboard. At the end of this activity, Kwacha handed out copies of a story about the weather which employed very simple vocabulary and grammar structure. The learners were asked to read the story out loud to their partners and discuss it. Kwacha then handed out simple comprehension questions based on the story.

Second Classroom Observation. At the beginning of the second visit, Kwacha put sentences on the blackboard which contained questions and answers using the verb 'to be' in the simple present tense. She varied the pronouns in order to demonstrate the different forms of the verb. There was some choral repetition of the sentences at this point. Kwacha then handed out a sheet which had a more sets of questions using the verb in the simple present and third person pronouns. She asked her students to interview each other and record the answers their classmates gave them in the form of, "Yes, she is" or, "No, he isn't." After some time, when the interviews were over, Kwacha had the learners return to their seats and began the process of going over the answers. This involved using the blackboard extensively and demonstrating the activity to the class again. The instructor had to do a considerable amount of reinforcement and repetition.

Chapter 4. Findings

The findings from the analyses of the interview data can be summarized as follows:

- The clear tendency was for the instructors to express the desire for autonomy in most of the coded categories.
- All of the instructors wanted autonomy over the selection of materials and activities.
- A full range of opinions regarding autonomy was expressed about all the other coded categories: assessment of learner proficiency, curriculum guidelines, linguistic content, needs assessment, professional development, relations with other staff, and themes. Most wanted autonomy in these categories. Some clearly did not.

Tables 2 and 3 below show the distribution of coded turns by instructor for the full set of interview data. Table 2 represents this distribution as a raw count of total number of times that each coded category was mentioned by each instructor. Table 3 represents this distribution as percentages of the total number of turns per instructor. On both of these tables, each of the coding categories are broken down into two rows. One is marked '+', or positive, indicating the number or percentage of turns in which the instructor expressed a desire for autonomy. The other is marked '—', or negative, indicating the number or percentage of turns in which the instructor indicated a desire for someone else to make decisions pertinent to this category.

In Table 2, the coded turns have been added horizontally so that the total appears in the column furthest to the right. These totals represent the number of marked turns for all of the instructors in each of the categories. In Table 3, the percentages of coded turns have been added vertically, so that the bottom rows all total 100. Each column contains percentages of the total number of marked codes per instructor.

No attempt was made to standardize the length of the interviews or the responses in this study, and the number of people I interviewed was small and not necessarily representative of the instructors even at this one site. For these reasons, I have not attempted to make comparisons between instructors or *across* codes. In the discussion which follows, my interpretations are based on a comparison of the distribution of codes *within* coded categories. This is best illustrated in Table 2 which presents the distribution in total numbers (i.e., the accumulations of mentions of each topic). Table 3 better illustrates the general tendency for all of the instructors to express a desire to have autonomous control over most of the coded categories.

Summary of the Instructors' Comments

Apostrophe

Activities. Apostrophe clearly stated three times that she wanted complete control over the activities she planned for her class. She linked this with having control over her choice of teaching materials but noted that basing classroom activities on an instructor's choice of materials only works after the learners have achieved a certain level of proficiency. At proficiency level one, the materials have to be adapted because, "I have found that there are too many things that they don't know to be able to pull an activity from out of a book. But at level three, you can use grammar books".

Table 2: Code Distribution by Instructor: Frequency of Mentions

	APOSTROPHE	*HAMNET*	*INGRID*	*JANET*	*KWACHA*	*TOTALS*
ACTIVITIES (A):						
positive (+)	2	7	3	13	2	27
negative (-)	1	1	0	0	0	2
CURRICULUM GUIDELINES (G):						
positive (+)	12	6	4	7	4	33
negative (-)	4	0	1	2	0	7
LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS (L):						
positive (+)	6	6	3	8	0	23
negative (-)	3	0	0	1	0	4
MATERIALS (M):						
positive (+)	9	2	1	14	2	28
negative (-)	0	0	1	1	0	2
NEEDS ASSESSMENT (N):						
positive (+)	3	5	7	10	6	31
negative (-)	4	2	1	2	1	10
ASSESSMENT OF LEARNER PROFICIENCY (P):						
positive (+)	3	6	0	8	3	20
negative (-)	10	3	0	1	2	16
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD):						
positive (+)	1	1	1	0	0	3
negative (-)	0	1	0	0	0	1
RELATIONS WITH OTHER STAFF (R):						
positive (+)	7	7	9	0	3	26
negative (-)	1	7	0	0	2	10
SETTLEMENT THEME CONTENT (T):						
positive (+)	5	2	3	1	0	11
negative (-)	1	1	1	0	1	4

Table 3: Code Distribution by Instructor: Percentages of Mentions

	APOSTROPHE	HAMNET	INGRID	JANET	KWACHA
ACTIVITIES (A):					
positive (+)	2.8	12.2	10.7	19.2	7.7
negative (-)	1.4	1.7	0	0	0
CURRICULUM GUIDELINES (G):					
positive (+)	16.7	10.4	10.7	10.3	15.4
negative (-)	5.6	0	3.6	2.9	0
LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS (L):					
positive (+)	8.3	10.4	8.3	11.7	0
negative (-)	4.1	0	0	1.5	0
MATERIALS (M):					
positive (+)	12.5	3.5	3.6	20.6	7.7
negative (-)	0	0	3.6	1.5	0
NEEDS ASSESSMENT (N):					
positive (+)	4.2	8.7	17.9	14.7	23.0
negative (-)	5.6	3.5	3.6	2.9	3.9
ASSESSMENT OF LEARNER PROFICIENCY (P):					
positive (+)	4.1	10.3	0	11.7	11.5
negative (-)	13.9	5.3	0	1.5	7.7
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD):					
positive (+)	1.4	1.7	3.6	0	0
negative (-)	0	1.7	0	0	0
RELATIONS WITH OTHER STAFF (R):					
positive (+)	9.7	12.2	22.5	0	11.5
negative (-)	1.4	13.2	0	0	7.7
SETTLEMENT THEME CONTENT (T):					
positive (+)	6.9	3.5	8.3	1.5	0
negative (-)	1.4	1.7	3.6	0	3.9
	100	100	100	100	100

Guidelines. In most of her discussion on this topic, Apostrophe expressed a strong desire to maintain her own autonomy. She believed that a curriculum guideline is important to have so long as it is not carved in stone. At one point, she stated that she would have a problem with any guideline which told her which grammar points to teach or themes to cover, noting that she will sometimes now go beyond what the *Green Book* defines as appropriate for her level if she feels the learners need it.

Apostrophe also said several times that the reason she agreed to participate in this study was because she wanted to see clear entrance and exit criteria established for the proficiency levels at this site. She elaborated on these points by making a clear differentiation between what she believed a guideline should specify in terms of theme and linguistic content. Apostrophe wanted to have a document clearly define which grammar points should be covered in each level, but she wanted a looser set of guidelines as far as thematic content was concerned.

Linguistic Elements. Much of Apostrophe's discussion on this point centered on how she determined which grammar elements to use in the classroom, how she progressed from one to another and on how these were incorporated into themes. She determined the grammar points through a formal needs assessment and informal group discussion. She used the *Green Book* as a checklist so that she could see how she was progressing through the linguistic content. She augmented this with other elements that she felt the learners needed. Thematic content, determined in a separate needs assessment, was matched to the grammar she had already determined.

This was a process of negotiation between instructor and learner. Apostrophe said that an instructor will:

> tell them that there are certain grammar things that we're going to do, but it doesn't matter what topics we use. You ask your students what to do… what do they want to learn, what do they think they need?

Materials. Apostrophe was clear about her desire to retain full control over her choice of materials. She said that she was used to making her own handouts and expanding from realia because she had to rely on her own creativity in her early years of teaching. Few texts were made available to her. She had difficulty using the wealth of materials available to her now in the resource room at this site. As she expressed it, "I have a really difficult time, as I said, going and getting a set of books off the shelf. I can't do that!"

She remarked that she still preferred making her own material, especially at the lower levels and that it would quickly become boring if she relied on commercial texts. These commercial texts were good for classes at the upper proficiency levels, however, because an instructor needed more material. In her opinion, standard course texts would not be a good idea for a program like this. Everyone has their favorite materials. In addition, the variables of learning style and continuous enrollment complicate matters enormously. With standardized materials it's difficult to accommodate:

> the student who arrives late, or who comes only in the morning or afternoon. What about the student who's a slow learner? And at the end of the program, he still hasn't passed level three and you're starting over again. Do you give him the same sheets?

Still, there were a few resources that all instructors might find useful, such as a standard set of grammar exercises. Thematic content that was determined by guidelines or supervisory staff might be acceptable if it were limited and backed up by provided materials.

Needs Assessment. Apostrophe conducted an informal discussion with the entire class at the beginning of each term to find out which settlement themes have the most relevance for her learners. This involved putting up a chart of options and recording their choices with little ‘sticky dots’. She augmented this during the term by writing notes on her lesson plans.

Apostrophe felt that it is often difficult to conduct a needs assessment for each of her learners. If the resources were available, Apostrophe preferred that someone else assessed her learners before they entered her class, both in terms of settlement theme and, as discussed below, language proficiency. This would be more efficient.

Assessment of Learner Proficiency. Apostrophe clearly and repeatedly expressed the desire for someone else to conduct assessments of learner proficiency. This was both in terms of initial placement and for purposes of promotion. In regards to testing, she said that, “I wouldn’t mind doing all of this if I had more time to do it.” She also indicated a preference for formalized proficiency assessment. Although the logistical problems would be difficult to surmount, she did, “wish that we had an entrance test and an exit test”. Apostrophe described the process of promoting learners as being essentially informal negotiation among instructors. An instructor was approached by another and asked, “ Do you have room in your class for this student? And then they might say, I’m really sure about this student. And I’ll say, send him on”!

This instructor had, on occasion, helped the coordinator conduct initial assessment for placement of students into classes when large numbers of learners registered. She looked upon these experiences as positive ones.

Professional Development. Although Apostrophe had much to say about professional development, giving several examples of how she profited from workshops, nothing in her discussion touched on issues related to instructor autonomy.

Relations with Other Staff. This topic was very important to Apostrophe. She enjoyed getting together with her colleagues and exchanging ideas. She especially liked to help less experienced colleagues. Apostrophe felt that the flexibility that she and her colleagues had towards promotion was important. The staff at this site consulted one another each time they intended to move a student up to a class with a higher proficiency level. Learners are permitted to try a higher level before committing to it, enabling them to grow in confidence.

Thematic Content. Apostrophe clearly desired autonomy over her choice of thematic content. Here, the link between required themes and the amount of work required to produce material was quite apparent. If she was told that she had to handle unfamiliar topics, she would "have to go scrambling to find all of that material". She said that, "if they want to tell us what themes, it's great, but give us lots of material to put with it."

Hamnet

Activities. Hamnet clearly wanted decisions about classroom activities and methodology left up to her. Even though she appreciated the communicative approach,

> I don't think they should tell us, you have to be teaching communicatively… first, it's not a communicative course, and second, sometimes you have students who don't like that, they don't get into it, and I don't think we should give it to them just because it's what everyone's pushing.

Her classes were segmented into two parts, one focusing on computer skills, the other on English. There was no explicit connection between the two. As Hamnet described it, the computer focus was too basic to incorporate word processing skills. It was designed to help learners become familiar with elementary computer functions. Incorporating English skills into this focus was difficult. Hamnet described the English half of her lessons as being mini-writing or pronunciation classes.

Guidelines. At the beginning of the term, Hamnet had planned to cover resume writing and other job-search orientated topics. This was the basic goal of her colleague, the evening computeracy instructor, whom she described as her mentor. However, she modified her plans after she had conducted her needs assessment. She found that the English skills of her learners were at a more basic level.

As this was her first term teaching this class, Hamnet relied on the notes left by her predecessor and the advice given to her by her colleagues. In her curriculum planning,

> for the next term, I think I'll have a better idea of what I'm doing and how I'm going to do it. Just from experience. So, I would say maybe at first I would've wanted the administration to… I think I'd end up saying I would like to do it myself!

Hamnet summarized her attitude towards guidelines in this way:

> I don't mind basic guidelines. At one time I think I would have liked people to spell out exactly, page this, exercise that, of what they wanted me to do. Now, I think I'd like guidelines. I don't mind suggestions, if they allow me to, really, maybe if something doesn't apply, I could just skip it.

Linguistic Elements. All the learners in Hamnet's class were at the same basic level as far as computer skills were concerned. The same could not be said, however, of their English language skills. Even though they had all achieved a minimum level of proficiency in English, there were marked differences in their abilities in the four language skills. Some had competent oral abilities based on their years in the workplace but possessed little written proficiency because of their limited schooling. Others were the converse in terms of their English skills.

It was clear that a learner's level of English proficiency was not the sole criterion for placement in this class. As a consequence, Hamnet assessed her learners at the beginning of the term in order to select the linguistic components for individuals and the group. She described this process in a manner that was completely matter of fact. With such an individualized approach to identifying language needs, there was little question about the autonomy the instructor had in this area. She had to do it herself.

Materials. A further consequence of Hamnet's individualized approach to handling these diverse language needs had to do with teaching and learning materials. A single text for all of her learners would simply have not been practical. Hamnet had full control over her choice of materials, especially in terms of the English component of the class, and she found it hard to envision an alternative under her circumstances. She gave several instances of welcoming suggestions from supervisory and curriculum staff regarding the computer component of her class. However, she definitely preferred to treat these suggestions as options for her consideration.

Needs Assessment. In regards to this topic, Hamnet was quite clear that even though she routinely did this herself, she would prefer it if someone else did a basic needs assessment of her learners before they entered her class. She had in mind something they could give the teacher when they supplied her with the,

> class list and say, you know, here are the questionnaires. And then the teacher would have an idea, because it took me weeks to find out who the professionals in the class were and who the ones were who were going for basic job positions.

Assessment of Learner Proficiency. Hamnet didn't seem to have strong opinions as to who should conduct the initial assessments of learner English language proficiency. She said that, ideally, she would like to see all of the learners tested before they entered her class as part of the registration process. However, she also said that she felt that it was more feasible under the circumstances if she administered the tests herself.

Similarly, in terms of determining who graduated from her class, she voiced no strong preferences. She wanted to be able to decide who received graduating certificates, but she had no objection to someone else coming in and independently assessing her learners for that purpose. Hamnet did express some frustration about the fact that unsuccessful learners in her program received certificates of participation, but this issue didn't seem to touch upon the question of instructor autonomy.

Professional Development. At this point in her career, Hamnet maintained contact with her professors at the university from which she had received her degree and she subscribed to several professional journals. However, she would have greatly welcomed more professional development opportunities. Several times, she referred to her own lack of teaching experience and how this sometimes eroded her self-confidence: "I mean, I tell you that I like flexibility and I like to make the ultimate decisions, but at the same time, I do question myself a lot."

Relations with Other Staff. Hamnet contrasted her experience at her present work site with the one she had had at her previous employer. At the private visa-student school she had worked at before:

> they told me, they said, do whatever you have to do, but keep them entertained. And I was talking about a verb tense lesson, which they didn't like, and I said, of course you don't like it. Who likes to study verb tenses? It's not always going to be a big barrel of laughs. You're here to learn the language! And my supervisor said, well, don't do it.

Hamnet described the way in which the difference in clientele and the motive for profit placed the instructors under intense pressure. In her opinion, these pressures interfered with the stated aims of this school, the acquisition of the target language, and the professionalism of the instructors. Seemingly, the instructors at that visa school enjoyed little autonomy.

Hamnet felt very different at her present work site. The coordinator's encouragement, "meant so much to me as a teacher, to know that if I say something, I'm going to have her support." Hamnet described several instances in which she consulted with the coordinator about how to deal with difficult situations. Hamnet also spoke about the invaluable help that she received from the evening computeracy instructor. Although the two instructors taught classes that were slightly different in focus, her colleague was able to provide Hamnet with examples of curriculum design and suggestions about materials and activities. In fact, she described this advice and the notes left by her predecessor as being the basis of her curriculum work.

Thematic Content. Given her clientele and the focus of this class, Hamnet devoted little time to settlement themes. As mentioned above, most of her teaching activities were intended to improve her learners' writing abilities so that they could eventually write resumes and covering letters for job applications.

Ingrid

Activities. Ingrid planned her activities very systematically, usually moving from the written to the oral and from the controlled to the specified. Much of what she did was designed to strengthen the self-confidence of her learners. When asked about the amount of autonomy she wanted in planning classroom activities, Ingrid summarized her feelings in this way:

> I really am of two minds on that. On the one hand, I really enjoy being in control over what I do in the classroom. I'm really the closest to the students and I know them the best... On the other hand, it's time consuming and tiring.

Guidelines. Ingrid's curriculum planning was also systematic. She used the *Green Book* and its list of linguistic elements arranged per level, as her "jumping board". She augmented these linguistic elements with the results of a questionnaire that asked her learners about their present use of English, their learning styles, career goals and the skills they wanted to work on. From these she determined the objectives and units for the term.

At the beginning of each term, Ingrid faced a new class with different needs from the last. As she described it, "if I had a curriculum carved in stone I wouldn't be able to really give them what they need." A curriculum guideline is good if it gives the instructor enough flexibility. This kind of systematic planning is hard work. In terms of autonomy, Ingrid said that,

> to be honest, it's not fun racking yours brains all the time about what should be done and what's worth the time investment. However, at times, I would like someone else to do all the work for me. But then, on the other hand, I really think that the teachers know their classes best.

Combining the linguistic elements with the thematic topics was an important aspect of Ingrid's curriculum work. In the course of her discussion, she gave several examples of why she combined them in the ways that she did.

Linguistic Elements. As indicated above, Ingrid supported the notion that the general linguistic elements for each class be properly defined by the curriculum guideline. Some refinement was still required, however. Each class would inevitably require certain emphases on certain elements.

Materials. Ingrid's opinions about materials echoed those she held about activity planning and curriculum development. She enjoyed creating her own materials but found that it was sometimes onerous to produce quality work. Ingrid found that supplementing her own material with commercial texts was often the best alternative. In this way, she viewed extracts from commercial texts as backups. Ingrid also emphasized that some learners were used to and preferred a standardized set of texts. These learners usually also desired standardized curricula. However, it was difficult to provide this when the program was subject to continuous enrollment and voluntary attendance.

One problem that Ingrid pointed to was that it was difficult to determine how satisfied the learners were with the materials being used at this site. She felt that there should have been a better mechanism for evaluating this and other aspects of the program from the viewpoint of the learners.

Needs Assessment. As indicated above, Ingrid regarded needs assessment as an integral part of organizing her curriculum and distinctly part of her responsibilities as a classroom instructor. She treated this seriously, saying that an organized curriculum is what learners expected and deserved. For Ingrid, conducting needs assessments was a dynamic process. Although she had the learners fill out an initial questionnaire, she found that they are not very forthcoming and that she had to, "add and subtract as I learn about the new things that have to be done". She said that she would welcome a tool that would better elicit these responses in her initial assessment.

Assessment of Learner Proficiency. Ingrid relied on informal, continuous assessment in evaluating the English language proficiency of her learners. She also negotiated with her learners to determine when they themselves wanted to graduate. Since her class' proficiency level was the highest at this site, the graduates from her class were the graduates from the program. Ingrid often counseled her learners about other programs they might enter once they graduated from her class.

Previously, for another class, Ingrid experimented with formal testing. She administered her own written and oral tests at the beginning and at the end of a term. As she described it,

> This cost me a lot of work and a lot of effort. So, I couldn't do it with every group, every session; but it was worth the effort because I saw the progress right there... and the students were really happy to see how much they had progressed.

Even though this testing seemed worthwhile to her, Ingrid discontinued it because of the extra work it entailed.

Professional Development. Ingrid expressed frustration at not being able to pursue her interest in second language acquisition theory actively because of family and career pressures. Professional development opportunities were also not as frequently available as she would wish. This sentiment was linked to her sense of professional development and concept of building quality language programs. As Ingrid put it:

> We're all very dedicated about our profession and really, really concerned about the well-being of the students and doing our best... the fact that we want a lot of control over our autonomy and what we do in the classrooms, it's not that we don't want to be... it's because we want to deliver the best quality program that there can be.

Relations with Other Staff. Ingrid went into some detail about how she solicited the opinions of her learners about the quality of the program. She used anonymous questionnaires at the end of each term and asked for verbal feedback at the end of each unit. She asked questions about the usefulness of the content and materials, the quality of instruction, and the appropriateness of the language level. In Ingrid's evaluation scheme, direct comments on her own performance were welcomed. She described how she took some negative feedback to heart and altered aspects of her teaching and curriculum design.

Ingrid felt strongly that this aspect of her teaching should be kept under her own control. Having someone else conduct program evaluation in the manner in which she described wouldn't necessarily provide accurate information because the learners, "tend to be very loyal to the teachers and don't want anyone else to be critical of the teachers". Besides, there is little purpose in having someone else view the results because, "I'm the one that these evaluations matter the most to".

Thematic Content. As is implied by the account of Ingrid's method of conducting a needs assessment described above, this instructor felt that it was important to tailor the thematic content to the particular learners one faced in a class. Each group of learners has different sets of needs that must be addressed. Instructors must retain control over how these needs are treated thematically because of these differences. Ingrid stressed, however, that it took time and effort to do this properly.

Janet:

Activities. Janet enjoyed preparing the activities for her lessons, and usually spent several hours each night doing this. She felt that this was necessary in a learner-centered program such as this. As she put it,

> The only way to avoid spending a lot of time preparing lessons is to have a set plan or course outline and just teach it, whether the students need it or not. If you're preparing a game or an activity and you cut and paste and things like that, then it will take more time. That's what I always do. I choose to make my lessons and activities more practical. And this takes more time.

In one of the lessons observed, Janet set the objectives and designed the activities in order to address specific language problems that learners were having outside of the classroom. One of Janet's principal goals in conducting on-going needs assessment was to deal with these problems as they arose. Janet tried to put herself in her students' place and cover every aspect of the language difficulties they were having. Her activities included a wealth of information related to socio-cultural and strategic competencies.

Guidelines. Janet was frank about the fact that she didn't rely on the program's grammar syllabus,

> I don't want to start out with the *Green Book*, saying that I always refer to it. At the beginning of a course I don't. I think I rely more on experience as to what's generally taught at that level and what students at that level basically need. And then test it out in the first week or so... and if I'm stuck for some grammar point to teach, I might refer to the *Green Book* again.

In Janet's opinion, a curriculum guideline was good for developing commonly understood definitions of proficiency in English. Instructors had to have a common understanding of what aspects in grammar should be covered in each level. Consequently, guidelines were also useful for assessment purposes.

Guidelines had to used flexibly, however. An instructor, "has got to gear her curriculum to her class". Many students moved faster than others. Many had different learning experiences or had been in the country longer than others. Each class was different. Guidelines were good reference points, but a successful instructor had to be prepared to deviate from them if her learners required something different.

Linguistic Elements. As can be inferred from the above, although Janet liked having a guideline that defined the linguistic elements for her class, she wanted to have the ability to deviate from it if she felt it was necessary. If they needed something more than what the guidelines specified, they would get it. Janet described this as 'expanding' from elements listed in the *Green Book*. On the other hand, Janet wouldn't teach them something they didn't need.

Materials. Although she felt it was a lot of work, Janet prepared most of her own materials. The temptation to become what she described as a 'book teacher' was great:

> I don't rely a lot on books and in a way, I think, maybe I should because it's easier. Just grab a book and say look, this is good! Let's do this! But, I can't do that… I have to be more practical and applicable to the class and what their needs are.

Janet started teaching adult ESL when there were few commercial materials available so she got used to creating her own. Rosewood had a wealth of materials and Janet felt a bit guilty as she admitted that, "I hardly ever go to these books. I go when I need something specific or when there's something that's going to take me too long to put together from scratch".

Needs Assessment. Janet felt that on-going needs assessment was much more important than any kind of formal initial assessment. What learners told you initially, "isn't necessarily the truth or what they really want deep down. It's what they hear or is expressed to the limit of their vocabulary". One needed time and experience to determine the needs of one's class. It was a process of getting to know one's students that Janet described as almost instinctual. An instructor's control over that process was therefore very important.

Assessment of Learner Proficiency. Janet believed that instructors should not conduct the initial assessment of learner proficiency for the purposes of placement. Someone who is trained especially for this task should be entrusted with this task because they have a better understanding of the guidelines and benchmarks. Assessment for the purposes of promotion and graduation, however, was a different matter. Although she didn't express strong opinions in this regard, Janet says that she preferred to make the final decisions about who was promoted out of her class. She felt that she had had the time to get to know her learners when the time came to make these decisions.

Professional Development. Janet clearly stated the need for more professional development, saying how much she valued the day-long professional development sessions that were once offered each term. She didn't, however, express any opinions regarding autonomy when discussing this issue.

Relations with Other Staff. Janet described relations with other staff at this site as being very positive. There was a healthy exchange of ideas and suggestions between all members of the staff. In terms of autonomy, Janet commented specifically on the relations she had with other agencies in the community. She expressed the opinion that the instructor should be involved when the site coordinator had discussions about learners with counselors. At the time of this study, the instructors at this site wrote brief reports that the coordinator passed on to other agencies. Despite the extra work involved, however, Janet expressed the desire to give more information than is normally required in these reports, either in written or oral forms, because she was the one who knew her learners the best.

***Thematic Content*.** As discussed above, Janet's choice of settlement theme was based on her on-going needs assessments. Initially, she always covered multiculturalism. This was not covered abstractly, however. Janet tried to ensure that everyone in the class understood the similarities and differences between each other's cultures. Her goal was to make "everyone feel comfortable with each other". Besides being good for 'ice-breaking', this unit lent itself to the kind of informal needs assessment that Janet preferred.

Kwacha

Activities. Given the proficiency level which she taught, Kwacha's activities featured a great deal of reinforcement and repetition. Many of her learners had had few formal learning experiences. Much of what she did was designed to get them to a point where they could learn independently. Kwacha was not opposed to anyone giving her suggestions about her choice of activities. As she put it,

> I don't mind if there is someone who wants me to do it in a particular way… I have to follow instructions. But I would very much appreciate it if there is a little bit of input. Not 100%, like, do it!

Guidelines. Kwacha pointed out that there was no guideline specifically for her literacy class. She used elements of the Green Book and the Ontario LINC Curriculum Guidelines as a starting point for her curriculum design. Thematic content was very important because most of her learners were struggling to develop basic Canadian life skills such as using local public transit. Strategic and socio-cultural information was also critical for the same reason, and Kwacha devoted great attention to the development of these competencies. She specifically referred to the LINC guidelines as an example of what she would prefer to use because she liked to be offered ideas, options and choices.

Linguistic Elements. Kwacha emphasized that she would like to have a set of guidelines for her class that took into account the fact that her learners had very limited English abilities. Her students found the verb 'to be' difficult. All in all, Kwacha felt that it was good to use guidelines as a start, but that an instructor had to find a compromise between what the guidelines specified and what the learners needed.

Materials. Although Kwacha preferred to produce her own materials, it was a problem that there were few commercial resources for students at this proficiency level available. This instructor liked to adapt material from other sources or use them as guides. Her work in this regard would have been made easier if more resources were available.

Needs Assessment. Kwacha's needs assessment were necessarily informal and on-going, given the lack of formal education of many of her learners. She was very concerned about how intimidating a formal assessment might be to these learners. For the same reason, Kwacha also felt strongly that she should be the one to conduct these assessments. However, she would have appreciated a guideline in this regard, so, "I have something to fall back on and get ideas from".

Assessment of Learner Proficiency. In terms of initial assessment of language proficiency, Kwacha would have preferred to have someone else provide her with a detailed assessment profile when a learner entered her class. She liked the fact that the coordinator spent time with each learner when they entered the program. Given the difficulty in communicating with learners at this level, the more detailed this assessment was, the better.

In terms of assessment related to promotion and graduation, Kwacha's opinions were similar to but more strongly felt than the ones she expressed about needs assessment above. For her,

> it depends on the kind of group you have or the kind of students you have… when they've been to school in their own country… they're used to having tests and getting marks.

For the majority of her students formal testing by someone other than the classroom teacher would have been very intimidating. Kwacha thought that it was crucial that the classroom instructor working at her students' level of English proficiency should control this aspect of the program.

Professional Development. Kwacha stressed how important professional development was to her, and she referred to workshops that had been offered by the Board in the past. She felt that it was important for instructors to choose among the opportunities an employer might present to them.

Relations with Other Staff. Kwacha felt strongly that she had a duty and responsibility to do the best she could with the responsibility in which she had been entrusted as an instructor. She valued the support and trust that she received from her supervisors and colleagues.

Thematic Content. Kwacha expressed a desire to have more guidance in the treatment of thematic content through a guideline. If

> there is a need in my class to do something on health or to go to the doctor or something like that, I would really like to have some guidelines somewhere, in the curriculum, where I can see how to go about it... maybe I can do the same thing in a better way.

Again, however, this was in the manner of having options and suggestions. Kwacha never expressed the desire to have a set of required themes.

Summary of Findings

The five instructors who participated in this study generally wanted and experienced relatively high levels of autonomous control over the curriculum decisions pertinent to their classes. In the interviews, the total number of coded turns which were positive in respect to autonomy outnumbered those that were negative, by a ratio of almost four to one (202 to 56, see Table 2). The desire for autonomy was far from uniform, however. In the discussion below, I try to summarize some of the subtleties and nuances pertaining to each of the coded categories and areas of commonality and differences among the instructors' stated views.

All of the instructors felt that they should have control over choosing classroom activities. This category had the second highest ratio of positive to negative marked turns: 13.5 to 1. Some of the more adamant remarks in favor of autonomous control were also in reference to this topic. Apostrophe repeatedly emphasized how jealously she guarded her control over choosing classroom activities. Hamnet went further than most of her colleagues in saying that she wanted control over the type of teaching methodology. Ingrid and Janet expressed their desire for autonomy in this area despite the fact that that this meant a lot more work on their part. Kwacha was less adamant in this regard, but she still resisted any notion of an imposed set of activities.

When discussing curriculum guidelines, it was clear that all of the instructors accepted them as necessary and potentially supportive. All of the instructors were concerned lest the guideline become a straight jacket, however. Positive marked turns outnumbered negative ones by a ratio of 4.7 to 1. The instructors clearly expressed the desire for a flexible document that allowed them to build specific curricula for particular groups of learners. Although Apostrophe felt that it was important that a guideline establish clear entrance and exit criteria for each level, she reserved the right to go beyond what a guideline might specify if her learners needed it. Hamnet stated that, although she welcomed the kinds of suggestions a guideline might make, she wanted to be able to skip anything that didn't apply to her class. Ingrid used the guideline as her starting point, but she also emphasized that a guideline which was carved in stone would hinder her ability to meet her learners' needs. Janet had perhaps the most independent attitude towards guidelines, using them chiefly as reference points for her own curriculum work. Since the particular guideline in use at Rosewood had little to say about literacy, Kwacha had little choice but to develop her own curriculum. Even so, she spoke positively about other curriculum guidelines in terms of the choices and options they presented.

In their discussions about linguistic elements, the instructors expressed similar opinions to those about guidelines. Positive turns outnumbered negatives one by a ratio of 5.6 to 1. None of the instructors had any problems being told what linguistic elements to cover in class as long as they had the freedom to augment or modify them. Apostrophe used the grammar list in the *Green Book* as a checklist, but she regularly covered elements specified for other levels when she felt it was necessary. Hamnet felt that she had little choice in this regard, given the different levels of English proficiency in the computeracy class. Ingrid was the instructor who most closely followed the guidelines as far as this aspect of her curriculum decision making was concerned. She still felt, however, that each class was different and required a slightly different approach towards grammar. Janet described her attitude in a way that was similar to Apostrophe's. Kwacha saw choosing linguistic elements as a matter of finding a compromise between a guideline might abstractly prescribe and what the learners actually needed.

Choosing materials was another of the coded categories in which the all instructors wanted autonomous control. It had the highest ratio of positive to negative turns: 14 to 1. All of the instructors noted that they welcomed suggestions, but felt that only they could ensure that the materials in use matched the needs of the learners. Apostrophe and Janet extended this further when they said that they were used to making their own material and rarely used commercial texts. Although they did note a few exceptions, by and large they were critical of most commercially produced material. None of the instructors supported the notion of a 'core' or 'course text' for a class or program. Hamnet noted that she had to carefully select a variety of materials for her class, given the multilevel aspect of the English component. Ingrid noted that it was a lot of work to produce one's own material, but that it was important to do so. Kwacha echoed this, emphasizing the difficulty she had finding good materials for her literacy class.

There was an interesting range of opinions among the instructors regarding needs assessment. Although the overall number of positive turns outnumbered negative ones by a ratio of 3.1 to 1, one of the instructors felt that she would prefer it if someone else took responsibility for this task. Apostrophe noted that, in an ideal situation, learners should be assessed before they entered the classroom, both in terms of settlement needs and English language proficiency. Hamnet agreed with this, having in mind a process in which learners were asked to fill out questionnaires when they initially registered. Ingrid felt that she would welcome a tool that would help her conduct the needs assessment, but she felt that it should remain as an integral part of her work. Kwacha felt that the lack of formal education experienced by her learners meant that she had to conduct needs assessments herself. Janet was not as adamant, but still felt that it should remain as part of an instructor's responsibilities. Complex issues of efficiency, quality of information and coordination of curricula throughout the overall ESL program is featured here.

Of all the code categories, assessment of learner proficiency had the lowest positive to negative ratio: 1.3 to 1. Most of the instructors, in fact, said that instructors should be relieved of much of the responsibility for testing and assessing English proficiency. They seemed to defer to testing experts and common standards. They also pointed out limitations in their own work schedules. Some of the same arguments were used in regards this matter as were used in discussions regarding needs assessment. Apostrophe clearly saw the difference between the two kinds of assessment, but she was even more adamantly in favor of having someone else take on this responsibility. Neither Hamnet nor Ingrid had strong opinions regarding this issue. Ingrid noted that some previous testing experiments she had conducted had been very time consuming. Janet mentioned the Canadian Language Benchmarks in her discussion, expressing the opinion that this task should be left to someone specifically trained to test in reference to the benchmarks.

Kwacha was in the minority on this topic, again because her learners were not used to formal testing or assessment. However, she did state that initial language assessment should be done by the coordinator of the program before the learner entered the classroom. She also said that it might be better for instructors working at other proficiency levels to surrender this responsibility.

Professional development was a coding category that was not mentioned very often during the interviews. Turns marked positive in terms of teacher autonomy outnumbered ones marked negative by a ratio of 3 to 1. In general, all of the instructors felt that they would like to be given a choice of professional development opportunities and to make their own decisions about whether to make use of them. They all said that professional development was important. As discussed below, this category did capture some interesting remarks that might not have surfaced otherwise. However, the interviews didn't shed too much light on the actual topic of professional development.

In regards to their relations to other staff members, all of the instructors remarked that it was very important to keep in close contact with their colleagues and that they tried to do this. Turns marked positive in terms of teacher autonomy outnumbered ones marked negative by a ratio of 2.6 to 1. Hamnet had some interesting things to say about a private provider she recently had worked for and how the profit motive there had been constraining and thus detrimental to staff relations and, in turn, the students' learning. Janet expressed an interest in taking on more responsibility in regards to dealing with relevant, outside agencies. Ingrid gave a well thought-out argument as to why instructors should be responsible for conducting program evaluation.

Most of the instructors wanted responsibility over thematic content. The ratio of positive to negative turns in this category was 2.8 to 1. Apostrophe felt strongly about this issue, saying that she should be supplied with the materials to teach any prescribed theme. In one sense, Hamnet's course concentrated on one theme: computeracy. In another sense, in terms of commonly taught settlement topics such as 'housing' or 'shopping', thematic content formed very little of what Hamnet covered. Ingrid felt that instructors had to control the choice of thematic content if classes were to be learner centered. Janet expressed much the same opinion. Kwacha was the only instructor who expressed a need for more guidance in this area.

Chapter 5. Discussion and Implications

Adult ESL curriculum development in the settlement context is a complicated phenomena, especially since the advent of communicative language teaching and the falling out of favor of the methods approach. Few aspects of ESL curriculum can be taken for granted, or represented as simple formulas. ESL instructors can no longer simply take a finished curricula and implement it in the classroom without modification. Indeed, the failure of the methods approach makes it questionable whether this was ever the case.

ESL instructors working for Canadian settlement language programs serve a diverse clientele. Continuous enrollment, a common feature of these programs, means that the instructors never know exactly who or how many learners they will face at the beginning of a lesson. Every learner in attendance might have very different motivations for being there, or disparate language skills and abilities. Learners commonly gain in proficiency at very different rates for reasons that are not easy to pinpoint. In short, adult learners bring a wide variety of skills and experiences to the classroom, all of which effect instruction and curriculum planning.

Canadian ESL instructors also work in a wide variety of circumstances. Classes might be held in comfortable surroundings, with a wealth of resources and supports, and plenty of opportunities for interaction with colleagues; or they might be held in cramped quarters that are completely isolated, with only the resources that the instructor can carry in his or her briefcase. This disparateness carries over to working conditions and professionalism. Some instructors have secure and well-paid positions in which they are expected to display a high degree of professionalism. They have access to regular professional development opportunities. Others do not have these advantages.

There is also a wide-variety of programs that an ESL teacher might work for. Some are geared towards specific communities or groups. Other programs have explicitly different goals. Most, however, have a mixture of classes which attempt to cater to many different needs in the local clientele.

This diversity places a high degree of curriculum responsibility on an ESL instructor working in this milieu. Curricula must be more individualized and designed for specific purposes. Individual instructor decision making in curriculum implementation therefore becomes key. In this study, it was clear that the instructors at Rosewood wanted autonomy over most aspects of the curriculum implementation process. There were important nuances, however. All instructors wanted autonomy over the choice of materials and activities. For the most part, these instructors were adamant on this point. In regards to the other 7 coded categories, there was a greater range of opinions. Overall, the instructors still wanted autonomy regarding assessment of learner proficiency, needs assessment, curriculum guidelines, linguistic content, professional development, relations with other staff, and themes. The desire for 'autonomy' in these aspects of curriculum development was not uniform across the coded categories or between instructors.

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I developed a broad definition for the term 'autonomy', drawing upon the way in which the concept has been used by a number of theorists (Dale, 1989; A. Hargreaves, 1994; D. Hargreaves, 1982; Helsby & McCulloch, 1996; Lawn, 1996; Robertson, 1996) and the term 'agency' as defined by Paris (1993). I defined 'autonomy' in this thesis as the degree to which teachers had the ability or desire to make curriculum decisions using personal initiative and intellectual engagement.

How, then, can this definition of 'autonomy' be applied in the context of Canadian settlement language programs? 'Autonomy' for a successful adult ESL instructor is a fundamental attribute, necessary in light of the diversity found within Canadian settlement language programs. Such instructors must be able to make curriculum implementation decisions with a fair degree of latitude, especially when the programs in which they work are based upon the dynamic curriculum model developed by Tyler (1949) and which contain the multitude of options inherent in the 'communicative approach' (Allen & Widdowson, 1979; Breen 1984; Canale & Swain, 1979; Stern, 1992). They can not afford to simply exercise technical expertise. Rather, given the kinds of programs in which they work and the choices they must make, ESL settlement instructors must find ways to enhance their professionalism, along the lines suggested above (Apple, 1995; A. Hargreaves, 1994; Dale, 1989; Fitzclarence & Kenway, 1993; Palmer, 1922; Paris, 1993; Pennycook, 1989; Robertson, 1996; Strevens, 1977).

In order to ensure quality of ESL instruction, policy makers, program administrators and curriculum developers must support measures that enhance instructor 'autonomy'. It is this attribute that prevents individual and contextual differences from being submerged in large national curriculum programs like the CLB (Brindley, 1989; Moore, 1997). Without such support, we lose the strength contained within diversity that Dewey (1916) wrote about.

Specifically, the findings of this thesis suggest that ESL instructors need curriculum support in a variety of areas to enhance their 'autonomy'. The majority of the participants in this study wanted curriculum guidelines that gave them sets of options and suggestions from which to choose, especially in terms of linguistic and thematic content. Although the majority greatly valued their freedom to choose activities and materials for the classroom, they often expressed frustration regarding the lack of time they had to prepare materials and activities. Some of the instructors expressed the same frustration over their lack of time to perform assessment, either in terms of learner needs or English proficiency. In this regard, support might come in two ways: either by having someone else do assessment, particularly in the case of English proficiency, or by greatly enhancing their abilities to perform these tasks through professional development. All of the instructors said that they needed more professional development opportunities and the chance to interact with their colleagues. Professional development is one of the more obvious ways in which 'autonomy' can be enhanced. Enhancing the chances that instructors have to interact is not as obvious, but just as important. In this way, we avoid enhancing the negative kind of 'autonomy' criticized by D. Hargraves (1982) in which isolated instructors work behind closed classroom doors. When instructors interact as autonomous professionals, they exchange ideas, seek advice, and help build up each other's morale. This, in turn, strengthens the programs in which they work and helps the students they teach.

Implications

The curriculum models developed by Clark (1978), Johnson (1989), and Markee (1997) give us valuable insights into the curriculum development process in SLE from a systems point of view. To build on these models, we need to develop a fuller understanding of the complexity and individual agency at work in contexts like the one studied here. In adult ESL, the divisions between various curriculum processes are far more diverse, complex, and variable than they appear in system-based curriculum models. In this milieu, at least, it appears that ESL instructors are required to take on many more responsibilities for curriculum development than these models specify. The processes in which these instructors engage have many similarities to the 'progressivism' value system' that Clark developed, in the sense that curriculum renewal in this context is commonly 'bottom-up' and initiated by instructors. These processes, as I hope I have demonstrated in this thesis, are complex, however, and do not fit neatly into any of the system-based curriculum models discussed above.

SLE curriculum theory and research should therefore develop from its present concentration on system-based approaches and explore questions related to individual agency and autonomy. How do individual instructors work with colleagues in terms of curriculum development and implementation? Are there aspects of curriculum processes that instructors feel more strongly about than others? What is the reaction of individual instructors to large scale curriculum innovation?

The implications for ESL curriculum practice are also distinct. In view of the importance of teacher agency and autonomy to the curriculum development process, it is imperative that ways of enhancing them be explored. In my research I found a number of ways in which 'autonomy' might be enhanced in the circumstances I studied. No doubt other trends would appear in similar or different contexts. This study is but one small step. What are the other supports needed in other contexts that supports instructor 'autonomy'? Is systematic professional development the best way to enhance 'autonomy'? How can collegiality be strengthened? How do working conditions affect 'autonomy' or 'agency'?

I hope that this study has contributed to SLE theory and practice and can be used to help inform future studies about instructor 'autonomy' and adult ESL curricula. It was my way of exploring issues that deeply mattered to me and which I found to be complex and fascinating.

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Appendix A: First Interview Question and Prompts

The first interview will be spent talking about the steps that the instructors take in developing their curricula and the decisions that they make. I will start with an open-ended question:

"What steps do you undertake in developing the curriculum you use at the LINC Centre"?

I intend to follow up with prompts in order to obtain information not forthcoming from this open-ended question. Examples of these are:
- "What does the curriculum you use contain"?
- "What curriculum documents are your lesson plans based on"?
- "What curriculum documents have you found most useful"?
- "What is the first step you take in drawing up your curriculum"?
- "Do you do a needs assessment"?
- "How do you do a needs assessment"?
- "What materials do you use"?
- "How are the materials chosen"?
- "Do you share materials or curriculum ideas with the other instructors who work here"?
- "How do you assess learner progress"?
- "How do assess the success of the program"?
- "How are the linguistic elements chosen"?
- "How are the socio-cultural elements chosen"?
- "How are the strategic elements chosen"?

Appendix B: Second Interview Question and Prompts

i) The first part of the second set of interviews will be spent talking about the lessons that I observed them teach. I will start with an open-ended question:

"How did you organise the lessons that I saw you teach?

I intend to follow up with prompts to order to obtain information not forthcoming from the open-ended question. Examples of these are:

- "Why did you use (material) when you taught (theme) the other day"?
- "Why did you cover (theme) the other day"?
- "Why did you cover (linguistic element) the other day"?
- "Why did you include (strategic or socio-cultural element) in your lesson the other day"?
- "How did you decide to (other decisions identified by the instructor during the initial interview) the other day"?

ii) The second part of the second set of interviews will be spent talking about the responsibilities and decisions the instructors have regarding curriculum development. I will start with an open-ended question:

"How do you feel about the amount of autonomy you have in making decisions related to curriculum development?

I intend to follow up with prompts in order to obtain information not forthcoming from the open-ended question. Examples of these are:

- "Who do you think should be responsible for (each of the decisions related to curriculum development identified by the instructor earlier)"?
- "To what degree do you want to be told what to teach"?
- "What assistance do you need to help you develop curricula"?
- "Would you rather develop your own curriculum or use one written by someone else"?

Appendix C: Letter Requesting Administrative Consent

April 1st, 1996

Administrator, ___________
Board of Education for _______________

Dear

I am writing to request administrative consent for a research study at the ________ Centre. This study would constitute the thesis requirement for my Masters of Arts in Education degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

I attach a copy of my thesis proposal for your consideration. This document makes my intentions and methodology explicit. I believe that the research I am proposing will benefit the participants and program I wish to study and make a contribution to the adult ESL profession as a whole. I propose to study the decision-making processes associated with curriculum development at a adult ESL centre and hope that the results of my study will be of practical use to instructors and administrators. In order to let you know more about myself, I have attached a copy of my current resume.

I have also attached a copy of the letter of consent form which I will ask participants to sign. This form makes clear the time commitment and ethical considerations associated with this study. In terms of time commitment, I will ask each instructor if I can interview and observe them. I will interview each instructor twice, for approximately 90 minutes at a time. I will observe each instructor teach three times. Each observation would be approximately one hour in length. In addition, I will ask each instructor if I can examine the curriculum documents they use.

In terms of ethical considerations, I have included safeguards in my research design to protect the integrity of the program under study and the confidentiality of all data collected from the participants. All the data that I gather will be kept in strict confidence. All information will be reported in such a way that individual persons, programs, organisations and institutions cannot be identified. Raw data will be stored in secure locations and will only be available to my thesis advisor, Dr. Alister Cumming, and myself. Participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time. Observations and interviews will be conducted in such a way as to not interfere with the normal functions of classes. All information will be destroyed two years after the completion of the study. These safeguards were approved by committee at OISE responsible for reviewing the ethics associated with this thesis proposal.

I would be very happy to meet with you or the committees at the Board responsible for reviewing requests such as this and answering any questions or concerns that you have. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours Truly,

Douglas Fleming
66 Pacific Ave. Apt. 1403
Toronto, Ont. M6P 2P4
tel/fax: (416) 763-4735
e-mail: dfleming@oise.on.ca

Appendix D: Letter of Consent for Participants

May 15th, 1996

Douglas Fleming
66 Pacific Ave. Apt. 1403
Toronto, Ont. M6P 2P4
tel/fax: (416) 763-4735
e-mail: dfleming@oise.on.ca

***A Study of Curriculum Decision-Making
and Instructor Autonomy Within Adult ESL***

Dear Colleague:

I am asking you to agree to participate in a study of the curriculum development process within adult ESL. This study will constitute the thesis requirement for my Masters of Arts in Education degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

I believe that this study will make a contribution to the adult ESL profession as a whole and will be of practical benefit for instructors and administrators. Little research has been conducted on how experienced adult ESL instructors develop curricula or view the curriculum development process. I greatly value your assistance.

Participants in this study will be interviewed twice and observed teaching three different lessons. They will also be asked for copies of curriculum documents. Each interview will take approximately 90 minutes. Each classroom observation will be approximately one hour in length.

In terms of ethical considerations, I have included safeguards in my research design to protect the integrity of your program and the confidentiality of all data collected. All the information that I gather will be kept in strict confidence. It will be reported in such a way that individual persons, programs, organisations and institutions cannot be identified. Raw data will be stored in secure locations and will only be available to my thesis advisor, Dr. Alister Cumming, and myself. Observations and interviews will be conducted in such a way as to not interfere with the normal functions of classes. All information will be destroyed two years after the completion of the study. You will be able to withdraw from the study at any time. These safeguards were approved by a committee at OISE responsible for reviewing the ethics associated with this thesis proposal.

Please note that you are under no obligation to participate in this study.

Please sign below that you have received information about this study and are willing to participate.

Thank you.

name (please print)	signature	date

If you agree to participate in this study, please keep a copy of this letter for your own records.

Appendix E: Personal Information Questionnaire

Code Name: ______________________

In the interests of making the interviews that we conduct more efficient, please answer the following questions.

a. How did you get into ESL?

b. What kind of training did you receive to become an ESL instructor?

c. Where did you work in ESL before coming here?

d. What else have you done besides teaching adult ESL?

e. What career goals do you have?

f. Have you learnt a second language yourself?

g. What kind of training or professional development have you had since entering ESL?

h. Have you ever worked on any material or curriculum development projects?

Appendix F: The Instructor's Handbook Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Adult ESL in Erie

- Philosophy of Instruction
- Levels of Instruction
- Organizational Structure
- Resource Center
- Conditions of Employment
- The Instructor-in-Training Program
- On-Going Staff Development
- Recording Attendance

Chapter 2: Adult Learning- Implications for Teaching

- Characteristics of Adult Learners
- Teaching as Empowerment

Chapter 3: Planning a Curriculum for Your Class

- What is a Curriculum?
- The Communicative Approach
- The Challenge of Designing a Complex Curriculum
- Diagnosing Learner Needs and Interests
- Major Components of the Curriculum
- Dividing Instructional material into 'Bite-sized' Chunks
- Putting It All Together

Chapter 4: Developing Your Lesson Plan

- Basic Principles of Effective Instruction
- An Inside Look at an Effective Lesson
- Selecting Appropriate Lesson Activities
- Mapping Out Your Lesson Plans

Chapter 5: Managing Your Classroom

- Being Prepared and Organized
- Creating a Climate for Learning
- Observing Readiness for Learning
- Managing Pace, Timing and Transitions
- Evaluating Learner and Lesson Effectiveness
- Conclusion

Chapter 6: Teaching Relevant Life Application Themes

- An Overview of Life Application Themes
- Identifying Appropriate Themes and Goals
- Defining and Sequencing Tasks
- Identifying Pre-Requisite Knowledge and Skills
- Planning Appropriate Learning Activities
- Some Effective Teaching Strategies

Chapter 7: Teaching Communication Functions

- An Overview of Communication Functions
- Identifying Appropriate Functions
- Defining and Coordinating Functions with Themes
- Planning Appropriate Practice Activities

Chapter 8: Teaching Language Structures

- An Overview of Language Structures
- Identifying Appropriate Structures and Their Order of Presentation
- Breaking Structure Material Into Bite-Sized Chunks
- Identifying Pre-requisite Structures Learners Already Know
- Selecting Appropriate Learning Activities
- Assigning Suitable Homework
- Seizing the Teachable Moment

Chapter 9: Teaching Vocabulary

- An Overview of Vocabulary
- Identifying Required Vocabulary
- Sequencing Vocabulary Logically
- Providing Context and Opportunities for Repetition
- Teaching Vocabulary-building Strategies
- Some Effective Teaching Strategies

Chapter 10: Teaching Pronunciation

- An Overview of Pronunciation
- Identifying Distinctive Sounds and Patterns to Teach
- Defining and Sequencing Pronunciation Material
- Selecting Appropriate Learning Activities
- Effective Teaching Strategies

Appendices

- Themes, Functions and Structures by Level
- Life Application Themes
- Communication Functions
- Language Structures
- Pronunciation
- Sample Lesson Plans
- Instructor Reference Materials